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# **Orwell's Perfect Murder: The Culture of Victorian Crime**

**MA by Research  
English Literature**

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2016**

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This dissertation asks what Victorian crime fiction can tell us about nineteenth-century attitudes towards crime, primarily focusing on the novels *The Strange Case of Doctor Jekyll and Mr Hyde* by Robert Louis Stevenson (published 1886, henceforth referred to as *Strange Case*), *A Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde (published 1890, henceforth referred to as *Picture*) and *Armada* by Wilkie Collins. The timeline of observation starts around 1866, with the publishing of Wilkie Collins's novel *Armada* and the steadily increasing demand for a new kind of crime fiction separate from the romance and mystery novels of the early 1800s. It ends around 1925 with George Orwell's retrospectively-focused *Decline of the English Murder*, but will utilise literary criticism leading up to the present day. Later critical material is used to discuss the culture of English crime, from degeneration theory to the popularity of Penny Dreadfuls. The purpose of this dissertation is to determine what makes the most compelling crime fiction and why audiences in the late nineteenth century became enamoured with a specific type of literary murder. The novelty of this analysis is, that whilst many of the critics observed in the fourth chapter have discussed patterns within crime fiction, none have yet combined this with Orwell's essay to create a crime fiction schema.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

Our great period in murder, so to speak, seems to have been between roughly 1850 and 1925.

George Orwell, *Decline of the English Murder* (1946)

Crime fiction has long been a popular form of English Literature and, like many other genres, authors and readers alike have engaged in the possibility of finding the 'perfect' story within this genre, with varying ideas about which elements a version must contain in order to be the ultimate example. This quest for perfection is based, whether consciously or not, on the concept that there can be a single narrative that is simultaneously emblematic of the entire genre and also the most compelling reading experience. Whilst this phenomenon is no doubt present in science fiction and romance novels, crime fiction seems particularly prone to having its critics and creators search for the 'perfect' variant. In this way, crime fiction is the peer not of other popular fictions but of town gossip or political intrigue, written or oral tales which have to have 'all the right elements' in order to be the most engaging and widely discussed. George Orwell would have us believe that this phenomenon is not bound to fiction alone but to the real stories of documented serial murderers, the comparison between novelist and journalist fuelling his writing on this matter as he describes the mass media's quest for what he terms 'the perfect murder'.

In his essay *Decline of the English Murder*, Orwell describes his 'perfect murder' as a crime performed by a 'little man of the professional class' who lives a 'respectable life in the suburbs', these being critical aspects of the documented cases he recites as his examples that have 'stood the test of time (Orwell, 1946, p.1). According to Orwell, each of these cases had key factors that roused the outrage of the British public, fuelled novelists, and (in Orwell's experience) excited the readership of newspapers like *News of the World*. Orwell refers to the audience of this media simply as 'you', his essay is written in the second person in order to paint a picture of the reader sitting in an armchair at the end of the day seeking out entertainment in the form of reported crime. Already this presents crime stories as something that most readers are interested in, Orwell confesses his own fondness for them and their power to capture the imagination of the English public, this captivation is what has compelled him to write this short chronicle. Orwell's 'model' is designed with the assumption that the sensationalist 'spin' and the British consumer are pre-supposed, very specific notions when talking about the history of any English murder, particularly within his timeline of 1850–1925. When he refers to the word 'perfect' it is with the understanding that he means the perfect spin story – the perfect amount of intrigue and the perfect amount of scandal resulting in the most consumed media and the most widely-read murder stories.

This consumer-based style of reporting and fictionalising of crime is a common issue when discussing real world and fictional crime of this period, but

crime seemingly 'ripe' for this kind of conjecture is what I shall refer to as the 'Orwell Model' from this point forward - a list of factors a crime must have in order to be deemed 'perfect' for entertainment purposes, qualities the story must exhibit to be seen as sensational and celebrated by the British public. This model, and the investigation of its effects, are to be discussed in relation to class/crime theories as well as the previously stated three primary literary texts. Considering Orwell's wry musings on what the British public want in their murder narratives (be they fiction or not), this dissertation seeks to answer the following questions:

- Why were Victorian consumers seemingly so preoccupied with murder?
- Why was violent crime so frequently used both as a plot device and point of intrigue?
- Why does Orwell's 'Man in the armchair' seek to read about the supposed 'perfect murder' perpetrated by 'the English gentleman murderer' (Rudrum, 2009, p.3)

When addressing these questions, it shall be against the backdrop of the literary criticism of the nineteenth century, the standard of which is surmised in *The Quarterly Review* of 1809, the publications' 'four pillars' being 'politics, literature, scholarship and science' (Elton, 1912, p.401). Whilst *The Quarterly* is pre-Victorian, periodicals such as this offer a 'picture of the national mind and opinion' (Eliot, 1912, p.403) throughout the century as '[this] new press furnished men of letters with a livelihood, a sounding-board and a public' (Elton, 1912, p. 418). Quite simply, this

was a new era of literary criticism, and in an age of new industry and invention these 'four pillars' would prove to be some of the main cultural fascinations of Victorian England. Despite these seemingly highbrow 'pillars', it is in this new age that detective fiction and murder stories flourished, violent crime and gruesome tales becoming an established (if not respected) trade of these 'men of letters'. The critical backlash created by this new genre is further explored in Chapter 3.

Like many of Orwell's essays, *The Decline of the English Murder* is written with no small amount of humour, outlining the practice of reading stories of violent behaviour in one's leisure time, the author suggesting a certain fondness for the British readers who practice this macabre pastime. Regardless of the wry nature in which he wrote, Orwell fundamentally understood that, bizarre or not, readers sought out particular tropes and motifs when scouring the newspaper (or indeed, a book store), and as such this dissertation utilises his schema in its own exploration of the genre, the better to understand these practices. The model can be articulated as a checklist for this purpose:

The Orwell Model Checklist:

- Murder takes place between 1850 – 1925
- Murderer is Male
- Murderer is of the 'professional class'
- Murderer leads a 'respectable life'
- Outrage ensues upon or before publication and report of the crime



- The crime can be fictional, non-fictional or a dramatization/retelling of a non-fictional murder

In terms of terminology, what exactly Orwell deemed to be the 'professional class' (Orwell, 1946, p.1) is open to interpretation, and Victorian class definitions differ greatly depending on the source and context, so I simply use Robin Gilmour's definition of the 'gentleman' in his book *The Victorian Period* (1993). When using this definition in relation to the key texts I focus on the particular aspects:

### **Masculinity:**

Gilmour suggests that, 'by the 1850s a new model – middle class, manly and modern – had established itself, partly through influence of Prince Albert (who was all these things) and partly in the fusion of Christianity with gentlemanliness in the doctrine of Christian manliness' this phenomenon being referred to by Gilmour and his peers as 'muscular Christianity' (Gilmour, 1993, p.21). Gilmour deems this term to be slightly 'misleading', but the virtues of the protagonists in the core texts are constantly engaging and wrestling with this established ideal of masculinity so the definition has its use despite any vagueness, it is an aspect of Victorian culture that cannot be avoided regardless of any issues with the specific terminology.

### **Class:**

Unlike masculinity, class is important in both the reader and the subject of a crime story, the concept of Orwell's 'professional class' arose in part due to commercial readership, through 'the development of new sub-genres [which were] designed to

cater to the tastes of new sorts of readers' (Guy and Small, 2011, p.33). The 'new' here also refers to what Gilmour deems the 'middle class', but whatever their individual definitions, critics agree that a new reading demographic had arrived in this period, and it brought with it a change in how the English told and sold fiction and non-fiction alike. The terminology in this dissertation is as follows: whenever a 'professional class', a non-aristocratic 'gentleman' or 'average Victorian consumer' is mentioned, I refer to these readers - the new, society-changing Victorian middle class.

The middle classes were not alone in being a new market to cater to at this time. Thanks to the Education Act of 1870 along with many organisations who were able to 'provide simple schooling in the early years of the century', there was 'now a new market of people wanting entertaining reading – and the wherewithal for publishers to provide it at the lowest cost' (Haining, 1975, p.23). This new demographic received its entertainment through newspapers and the Penny Dreadfuls, a cheap and quickly distributed form of fiction aimed at a working class audience, often depicting horror stories of violent criminals and tall tales to thrill a younger readership. Whilst they certainly do not fit into Orwell's 'professional class', they should certainly be remembered when considering the all-important consumerism of crime fiction: 'the rule of thumb favoured during most of [the 1800's] was that the "working class" [was a term used to describe] the lower-middle and lower classes together, [this group] constituting at least three-quarters of the total population' (Altick, 1957, p. 82). The subjects of these fictional and non-fictional

murder stories found their class and social position scrutinised by their peers and retroactive critics like Orwell, but the class of the spectators themselves holds little relevance, for 'whatever newspapers and other periodicals a household took in would filter down to the servant's quarters' (Altick, 1957, p.83). Spectatorship and the means of spectatorship was also solidified in this time period as 'the average Englishman came to need newspapers as never before' (Altick, 1957, p.322), yet another reason why Orwell marked this as a golden age in British murder stories.

There is a certain level of 'quintessential Englishness' about Orwell's introduction to his essay, he sets the scene with 'feet up on the sofa', 'roast beef and Yorkshire [for the evening meal] driven home by a cup of mahogany brown tea', 'the wife is already asleep' and, knowingly, 'the children have been sent on a nice long walk' (Orwell, 1946). Now, whether this is his idea or ideal of Englishness or whether it is his perceived notion of the readership of the *News of the World* is unspecified, though his choice of title would suggest that he is aware and purposefully representing Englishness as embodied by the average newspaper reading man, nuclear family and all. 'It comes as no surprise, given the roast beef-eating, tea-drinking readership of this kind of writing, that the genre Orwell has in mind is characterised by its quintessential Englishness' (Rudrum, 2009, p.2). Orwell is particularly interested in how Victorian-era sensibility governs the nature of the English murders of the age, for the perpetrator 'commits his crime out of passion for his secretary, but he's really driven by fear of public shame: it's easier for him to

poison his wife than to go through the public scandal of divorcing her' (Worsley, 2013, p.1). This is a recurring plot that predates the nineteenth century, the anonymous play *Arden of Faversham* (1592) and many of its peers also explored the non-fictional issues of murdering a spouse to avoid public disgrace (although in *Arden* it is because divorce is not a function of marital law that women can instigate and so the play is more a discussion of female agency). That being said, it is still by Orwell's estimation a purely English motivation and by the nineteenth century became emblematic of the crippling nature of social phobia and performance. Later I explore how Stevenson lacked Orwell's fondness for the 'shame motive' whilst still acknowledging it as a factor, Stevenson saw the pressure to perform the act of the English gentleman as a physiological assault on the mental stability of young men growing up in polite society, his murderer Hyde acts out of compulsion and want, with shame (Jekyll) literally having to be repressed in order for his desires of a free and debauchorous lifestyle to be attained.

Long before Orwell and his peers retrospectively mapped out patterns in nineteenth century serial killers, late Victorian genre fiction propagated many class-based 'myths' about the nature of real world crime, and thus contemporary understanding of said crime is ever more complicated. The purpose of these myths is multiple, simplifying for newspaper headlines and creating cautionary tales for children – Spring-Heeled Jack and other Victorian bogey men of English folklore used to scare children and the wider population into good behaviour (ironically, given that the fiction these figures inhabited, the Penny Dreadful, was also seen as

the cause of bad behaviour). Similar myths also bled into genre fiction; this can be seen in the notion of the 'criminal underclass' as represented in stories like *Child of Jago* by English writer and journalist Arthur Morrison and the 'privileged offender' as represented in *A Picture of Dorian Gray* by the titular character himself, the myth here being that there are simply two types of criminal – the rich and the poor, the crime borne of desperation and the crime borne of a perceived inherent inhumanity.

The myth of the 'criminal underclass' reflects and vilifies an economic truth of the time – the birth of an underclass created from factory strikes, the groups who were labelled as such simply being a generation of working class people twisted into the fictional subhuman so that rich factory owners did not have to sympathise and could instead rule off a genuine social and economic problem, being assured that through their inherent criminality, this underclass had doomed themselves. The other myth, that of the 'privileged offender', works entirely in opposition - it is focused on the cultural elite. Critic Simon Joyce stipulates that cases such as that of Dorian Gray do not exist outside of fiction, that it is yet another construct: 'the idea of the criminal as an intellectual or artistic genius had become a conservative and reassuring notion by the end of the nineteenth century' (Joyce, 2002, p.501). I broach the complicated notion of what exactly Joyce means by 'comfort' later, but his insinuation is that outside of fiction, men like Dorian simply do not have the impulse to commit anything but non-violent crime and that debauchery and murder are beneath them. Joyce's concept of the Victorian gentleman is that he lacks the impulse for such infractions due to his lavish lifestyle: all whims are catered to; such base

impulses would not occur. Stevenson refuted this claim in his depiction of Jekyll, a juxtaposition that I also explore later.

I have so far outlined class definitions for the purposes of this investigation, but the concepts of 'high and low' life and the 'urban villages' and ghettos of stories like *Child of Jago* are harder to pin down to simple truths such as 'the privileged offender does not exist outside of fiction' or 'the privileged offender does exist outside of fiction'. Judith Walkowitz comments in her 1992 book *City of Dreadful Delight* that 'urban explorers adapted the language of imperialism to evoke features of their own cities' that these voyeurs mentally and textually 'transformed the unexplored territory of the London poor into an alien place, both exciting and dangerous' (Walkowitz, 1992, p.18). These 'explorers' and 'spectators' added a great deal of physical material to the mythification of geographic London through pamphlets, essays and journals, and I elaborate on them and the popularity in the proceeding chapters.

The narratives of the 'urban explorers' and 'privileged offender' are at least partially manufactured, for their purpose to sensationalise and sell as Orwell and Gilmour surmised: 'the second half of the century [saw] the beginnings of what we would call today a consumer or commodity culture', the 'cult of celebrity' and the rise of 'sensationalist journalism' (Guy and Small, 2011, p.29). This study of the period and some of its literature is viewed through the lens of the writer/consumer relationship in which consumers of these novels and newspapers are being sold

fictional, sensational and anxiety-driven narratives, the views of which they might be prone to map onto the society they inhabit.

These narratives appeased the consumer by 'confirming' their fears surrounding societal unrest caused by urbanisation, industrialisation and poverty. That these ideas were found to be titillating reveals both the hidden assumption of a link between social status and morality, and that this assumption is deeply problematic: Orwell implies that such narratives absorbed the nation because they demonstrated how 'ungentlemanly a gentleman' could behave (Rudrum, 2009, p.13). These factors created complications in what nineteenth century social commentator Joesph Adshead deemed 'decency', a term he used throughout his career from his writing in *Distress in Manchester* (1842) to that in *Prisons and Prisoners* (1845) - that 'decency' in the late Victorian period was under threat from these changes in society and that 'it would be impossible to overstate the moral and social evils arising from this state of things'. Adshead saw 'decency' as a standard of moral and physical living, a measurable quantity both in a man's morals and in physical spaces - 'mere decency requires four rooms [where there live children of both sexes]' (Adshead, 1842, p.34). These complicating factors (and deductions such as Adshead's) only added to the sensationalist narratives of degeneration and the criminal underclass, and possibly go some way to explain the popularity of detective fiction - that 'preoccupations' arose in nineteenth century literary works concerning 'transgression, its detection and its punishment', in short combating what Chris Pittard calls 'impurity' and what Adshead calls a diminishment of 'decency' (Guy

and Small, 2011, p.53). Orwell's perfect murder is also 'bound up both with the English class system and the notoriously English trait of sexual repression' (Rudrum, 2009, p.2).

The narratives, or 'myths' as Matthew Sweet addresses them, come in the form of fiction, such as Penny Dreadfuls, and non-fiction, such as newspapers - Penny Dreadfuls appealing to the 'low brow' consumer, conjuring images of the Victorian bogey man, 'middlebrow' audiences experiencing these exact same myths through authors like Stevenson, his novels corrupting and questioning the nature of the 'gentlemen' and engaging with the psychology of crime. The popular myths are the same and ever present, despite these sources having different motives behind the writing or no motive at all. Penny Dreadfuls (or more accurately, Penny Bloods, which were the narratives more focused on violent crime, as 'Dreadfuls emerged later in the 1860s and mostly dealt with the lurid adventures of youthful heroes' (Haining, 1975, p.17)) were written and distributed with the simple intention of providing 'realistic sensation - anything to please for a few hours, and the less demands it made on the comprehension of the tired worker the better' (Haining, 1975, p.14). These narratives were aimed at the 'tired worker' and eventually culminated in Orwell's *News of the World* reader, none of whom cared much for fact or fiction but purely 'sensation'. John James Wilson, an editor of several publications, wrote in 1932 that 'it was thought at the time these books were published, that Penny Dreadfuls were the origin of all youthful crimes and parents not only banned them, but, when discovered, burned them without mercy.' Wilson



goes on to say that 'today youthful crimes are put down to the cinema', and Peter Haining, who quoted Wilson in 1975 added that contemporarily 'one could add television to that' and writing in 2016 we could add videogames and countless other media to this evolutionary tree of blame for youthful criminal action (Wilson, as quoted by Haining, 1975, p.17).

Another question I seek to answer is how did exactly did the aforementioned social stigmas and practices impact on Victorian life, literature and consumerism? How did fictional and non-fictional murder bring comfort to the consumer-based public (my specific definition of 'public' in this essay is Gilmour's 'new model' of consumer that I will return to later (Gilmour, 1993, p.21)). Above all - what of Orwell's man on the sofa? Why, precisely, does he 'naturally' want to read about this topic and what purpose does this type of fiction serve that other forms of entertainment and spectacle do not? Regarding both the model and the textual examples of murder, I explain the critical works by Sweet, Ahead, Danahay, Pittard, Walkowitz and Joyce provide, utilising each for their particular focus on criminal discourse - Sweet's 'Twentieth Century Myths', Joyce's 'Privileged Offender', Ahead's 'Decency in accordance with Degeneration', Pittard's 'Purity in accordance with Degeneration' and Danahay's 'Working-Class Body'. Many of these authors make reference to each other and Sweet directly references Orwell's essay. Whilst each of these critics offer their own individual explanations, their combined works are henceforth used to unpack the Orwell Model – its assumptions, flaws and uses.

Late Victorian crime fiction seemed to be very much in the business of standardising and popularising conceits such as the plot reveal that 'the butler did it', but interestingly this is a twentieth century practice retrospectively mapped onto Victorian literature by what Sweet calls the fallacy of the 'liberated moderns' (Sweet, 2011, p.ix). The logic behind this mapping is presumably that because this is a common conceit and because the end of the nineteenth century saw a boom in detective and mystery fiction, that the two must be linked. This plot contrivance is typically attributed to Mary Roberts Reinhart in her novel *The Door*, yet this was not published until 1930; even examples that predate it were published years after the fin-de-siècle. What is more, this was never a recurring plot point with Reinhart or her precursors, as Nate Pederson humorously puts it in his investigative article on the matter 'the butler was framed' (Pederson, *The Guardian*, 2010). This is not to say Victorian crime fiction was devoid of repetitive tropes, however: the 'parlour scene' (typically a gathering of characters at the end of the novel where the detective explains away the mysteries encountered thus far) was a recurring part of plot development. First used in Edgar Allen Poe's *The Murder in the Rue Morgue* (commonly regarded as the first 'modern detective story', published in 1841), the 'parlour scene' may not always take place in an actual parlour but always serves the same plot purposes and provides closure, later used by Conan Doyle and later still by Agatha Christie for their Sherlock Holmes and Poirot characters respectively. The parlour scene can now be found in any typically structured detective novel. Poe set a

precedent and Doyle solidified it in the public mind-set and readership. As Matthew Sweet phrases it in his 2011 book *Inventing the Victorians*, many of these concepts of Victorian life are 'myths', created due to the prudery twentieth- and twenty-first-century people projected on to the nineteenth century, forged by miscommunication or mistranslations, and much like any myth not being outright fabrications or lies, but half-truths based in flawed, passed-on knowledge.

This misunderstanding of Victorian culture is not attributable to crime fiction alone; an example Sweet offers is of the 'draping the piano leg' a myth popularised by historian H.L. Beales in 1947 concerning conservative Victorians attitudes towards sexuality in which Victorian housewives would cover the legs of their furniture after considering them a form of provocative 'exhibitionism'. According to Sweet, this comment from Beales was a misreporting of an ongoing nineteenth century gag in which various forms of American media would chide the prudishness of the English, and the English would respond in kind, the 'draped piano leg' itself originating from an English burlesque show *Mr Buckstone's Voyage Round the Globe* that assured English audiences that 'to the west, the legs of the table in trousers are drest' (Sweet, 2011, p.9). Not only does this perfectly illustrate our homogenised view of the people inhabiting the latter half of the nineteenth century, it also illustrates that they were not the 'humourless' and overly 'prudish' folk modern audiences may wish them to be so that we may feel more freely expressive and unshackled from their archaic sensibilities, referred to by Sweet as the fallacy of the

'Liberated Moderns' (Sweet, 2011, p.4). Historical revisionism and inaccuracy are complications for any literary analysis and the nineteenth century seems to Sweet particularly susceptible to accusations of homogeny. As Orwell says, 'contrary to popular belief, the past was not more eventful than the present. If it seems so, it is because when you look backward, things that happened years apart are telescoped together, and because very few of your memories come to you genuinely virgin' (Orwell, *My Country Left or Right*, 1940 p.1). Novels like *Strange Case* and *Picture* are oddities in this specific reading of the literary canon; whilst Victorian novelists are retrospectively credited with creating such literary tropes of 'the butler did it' or 'the parlour scene', Wilde and Stevenson were undoubtedly seeking to question the status quo, not establish a new one. The absence of detective figures and the moral exploration of 'the English gentleman' are destabilising factors, they seek to disrupt and discombobulate stagnant thought, status quo and taking things for granted. As Sweet alludes to – Victorians are so often accused of prudishness and stubborn, unfaltering sensibilities, yet Wilde and Stevenson were also Victorian gentlemen, and much like their protagonists they were not pleased with the traditions they found to be harmful and so created the figures of Dorian and Jekyll to demonstrate what could happen to respectable men put under such constraints – social alienation and suicide. Orwell's choice murders are supposed to be more alluring due to the hypocrisy of the killers being wealthy and part of civil society, but Wilde and Stevenson depict this as tragic and hold the likes of Orwell's man on the sofa as

complicit in the social judgement and pressuring that push Jekyll and Dorian to self-destruction.

The anachronistic attitude that Orwell warns of is one even he falls victim to in *Decline* – criticism being a retrospective act he not only cultivates very specific concepts of the quintessential English murder and the fashionably new American murder, but also maps twentieth century sensibility onto nineteenth century events and even nationalises types of crime. Whilst Orwell's transgressions are offered as humorous notions the homogenising of crime and class based attitudes towards it are prevalent in the discussion of crime fiction throughout the past few centuries, addressed further in Chapter 3. Current critics, Brown and Bell chide the conventions of traditional criticism of the genre, these modern writers and their peers hoping to avoid the homogenising damning of Victorian critics and the homogenising praise of critics like Orwell. Certain aspects of Orwell's paper, humorous or not cannot be refuted, the popularity of certain forms of violent crime he speaks of is impossible to avoid when considering the genre of crime fiction, for 'death seems to provide the minds of the Anglo-Saxon race with a greater fund of innocent amusement than any other subject (Dorothy Sayers as quoted by Worsley, 1993, p.60), murder fiction ultimately being deemed by Orwell a genre of 'quintessential Englishness' (Rudrum, 2009, p.1).

The authors Stevenson and Wilde refute such patriotism and instead seek to reveal the un-healthiness of English sensibilities towards the male performative acts

of the gentleman, toward crime and toward aesthetic beauty. As Richard Walker phrases it, 'the fin de siècle Gothic of Stevenson and Wilde' (what he refers to as the 'Gothic Doppelganger Novel') sought 'to represent the divided properties of the subject in nineteenth century modernity' (Walker, 2007, p.23), 'social and cultural constructions' were all going through 'rapid changes', so the novels seek to address the frailty and danger of these constructs.

A standard mystery novel involving murder as a plot device would be one in which one aristocrat kills another in order to inherit a fortune, land or property, and whilst we see the remnants of this plot line in *Hound of the Baskervilles* and *Armada*, the crime present in our two latest novels holds no such motive. Hyde kills for pleasure, Dorian kills for convenience, artistic expression and because he was practically groomed into thinking it morally excusable. These are emotional killers; they commit their crimes because it is an expression of who they are as people, not for greed or money or any motive that may have been tangible to a middle-class audience in pursuit of their own (less bloody) social mobility. In this, our killers transcend what might be deemed the 'blue collar' crime of murder, something thought to be the 'province' of the lower classes due to its physicality: according to Simon Joyce 'literary figures' like Jekyll and Dorian 'renewed interest in crime as not only imaginative and aesthetic, but as the province of the privileged classes' (Joyce, 2002, p.503).

When considering the novels they inhabit, this period in literature saw 'the invention of hybrid genres and blurred relationship between various kinds of sub-genre' (Guy and Small, 2011, p. 113) and whilst many of the popular genres of the time bled into one another, these two novels are exceptionally hard to pin down, as '*Strange Case* suggests something curious and inexplicable – a text which is difficult to classify' (Walker, 2007, p. 69), fitting for a novel so preoccupied by identity crisis. An example of these merged subgenres is Stevenson's own *Treasure Island*, as it is simultaneously a lost world and adventure narrative. *Strange Case* and *Picture* both have detective characters at the centre of their narratives, yet are never categorised as detective fiction. Like Shelley's *Frankenstein*, *Strange Case* is indeed a case of science fiction and body horror, born of dark fantasy. As the necrotised flesh of Frankenstein's monster is replaced by the remoulded flesh of Hyde, both transform the fabric of humanity and what is recognisably human on a visceral and physical level: ultimately effecting the abstract, emotional and spiritual states of each 'monster' and how they are conceptualised. These two texts, considered to be 'the most canonical Gothic novels of the nineteenth century' (Walker, 2007, p.32) both create 'distinct ideas of [the] body', but they are bodies in turmoil, and conveniently Hyde's actions allow Utterson to treat him just as he views him – as misfit, other and danger. According to author Richard Walker, it is indeed Hyde and Jekyll's action that makes their bodies outcasts, they are an 'unstable play of masks and guises' rather than the 'punctual autonomous self' that society wants them to be (Walker, 2007, p.33), their lack of autonomy creates conflict, and that conflict creates anxiety

in the culture around them, and would have always done so regardless of Hyde's criminality, for like many views in Victorian society it is a sharp binary that he lies on the 'wrong' side of.

Returning to the topic of murder, Orwell's model distinctly leaves out motive. Hyde and Dorian's acts of violence also exhibit this absence, all three cases being due to a topic I reach in the final chapter – the idea of inherent criminality. Whilst motive is not one of Orwell's specific categories of importance, the inference of the 'gentleman murderer' is that their 'motives arise largely from status anxiety or sexual repression (or both)' (Rudrum, 2009, p.3). Orwell's focus on serial killers and his disregard of motive (despite many of his examples having 'traditional' monetary motive like the killer Dr Robert Palmer) leads to the only consensus offered in *The Decline of English Murder*, for Orwell does not answer why readers seek out specific tropes and traits in their crime narratives, but focuses on the 'decline' of this practice both in its style of Britishness and in actual crime rates, claiming this 'decline' has one singular cause – war.

Elizabethan theatre incorporated live executions of criminals into their performances and the severed heads of criminals were adorned on spikes at London Bridge until 1660. These London-based forms of public justice litter the city's history, the Victorians' equivalent being public hangings – but was it a lack of warfare in England that inspired such bloody sites to be sought as a form of entertainment? In the age of the printing press and increased reading rates, was murder fiction a



substitute for actual violence? Was it a stand-in, an evolution of the non-fictional brutality that we no longer needed? Orwell does not refer to the London Blitz specifically as a form of violence deterrent for the literary industry, indeed he seems to be referring to First World War trench warfare. His vagueness in terms of date and precise conflict seems to be akin to the turn of phrase 'what we need is another war', the insinuation being that warfare is so violence and chaotic that it forces one to action and dispels complacency, and it seems Orwell would have us believe it also dispels crime rates and the depiction of crime in art and media. This correlation/causation narrative seems simplistic, and it also directly contradicts Orwell's preconception that the British public love murder, for if they love murder, should they not too love warfare? Comfort is the main factor - the man on the sofa is comfortable physically and comfortable in the notion that as grizzly as the outside world is, it couldn't possibly happen to him. Sweet adheres to Orwell's conclusion, that a lack of war or public violence forces blood thirsty gazes elsewhere, that 'when public executions were outlawed in 1868, Britons had to go elsewhere to satisfy their curiosity about violent death and those who perpetrated it' (Sweet, 2011, p.79). In 1881 a stage show rendition of Jekyll and Hyde was reviewed for the *Pall Mall Gazette*, the writer claiming 'scratch John Bull and you find the ancient Briton who revels in blood, who loves to dip deep into a murder, and devours the details of a hanging. If you doubt it, ask the clerks at Mr Smith's bookstalls, ask the men and women and boys who sell newspapers in the street. They will tell you' (Anonymous quoted by Clarke, 2014, p.23). Murder and violence as entertainment are relished in a

manner that being embroiled in violence yourself is not, and I return to this subject in chapter four, focusing on the culture surrounding real world violence and crime.

Orwell wrote *Decline of the English Murder* in 1946 for the British newspaper *Tribune* under a series of articles titled 'As I Please', and considering the amount of essays the writer penned over his career, literary and social commentary such as this were a passion for him that he was free to exercise as literary editor for the newspaper. *Decline* was written and published after the second World War, and addresses all of Orwell's favourite talking points present in other essays and articles he wrote at this time – British politics, Britishness, literature and his fellow authors. A tension that surfaces in reading of Orwell's essay is that of its purpose and tone. Was *Decline* designed to be a satirical piece, designed specifically to scoff at the notion of the 'Perfect English Murder'? Was Orwell's intension to chide those who would simplify crime narratives, to suggest that they would have crime turned into formula for public consumption? Was this chastisement aimed at the media, the consumer of that media or both? All these questions are to be addressed in this dissertation.

My final chapter focuses on Cesare Lombroso. Lombroso and his criminologist peers thought they had found the 'answer' to crime, that criminals 'are a distinct physical and biological type' (Ambrosini, 2006, p.147), the solution, as it were, to criminality, that they could label a man criminal through scientific method before they had the chance to commit a crime (in Lombroso's case, through the study

of the body). Lombroso and his peers' ideas gained traction as they fed into a pre-existing anxiety of degeneration theory: 'theories of degeneration and the view of crime as a throwback to an earlier, more primitive phase of human development were prevalent' (Danahay, 1999, p.21). Ironically, crime fiction critics, in a similar way, appear to be constantly trying to find a 'formula' or pattern in crime narratives, as Ian Bell writes: 'the immediate problem for anyone wishing to offer commentary on this form [crime fiction] is that its apparent homogeny and recognisability begins to disappear once examined'. Simply put, crime fiction and the study of it is as complex and nuanced as the study of its nonfictional counterpart (Bell, 1990, p.5). Crime fiction is as complicated as criminals themselves, so the critical works selected attempt to unpack the complexity of murder fiction, its place in the industrial world and its function, not just as a form of entertainment, but as a comforting social phenomenon. Victorian culture promoted its own kind of self-inflicted homogeny, however, the idea 'that history had a design and a purpose'. Two of my three literary texts (*Picture* and *Strange Case*) seek to disrupt and question the status quo, as well as airing concerns that contemporary sensibility bred ill behaviour, causing problems as well as increasing those created by industrialisation. 'So strongly did people believe this that it led them to read into Darwin's essentially directionless theory of evolution a moral progressionism' (Gilmour, 1993, p.31). Victorian fears and fiction were so affected by contemporary scientific discoveries that publications such as A.L. Wigan's *The Duality of the Mind* (1844) could and did directly affect public discourse on 'a fundamental duality in human consciousness' (page 1), played out in

*Strange Case*, which also explores the notion of having a 'divided brain'. Stevenson's use of multiple personalities inhabiting one body, of Jekyll's secret desires becoming manifest in the form of Hyde and the different ways the two characters are viewed and treated all explore this theme of being 'at war with oneself', the very physiological notion Wigan addressed in his paper a few decades earlier, a revolutionary notion at the time (Walker, 2007, p.29). Socially and morally, Jekyll created Hyde to purge his impurities, but Stevenson had the titular character meet social disgrace and ultimately death as a direct result of these actions, the author addressing the contemporary crisis of masculinity by encouraging his fellow man to embrace this duality in order to attain balance and harmony. Stevenson's novel is a warning to the posturing Victorian gentleman that separating one's ugly traits (or pretending that they don't exist) would make them only more distinct and hideous – there is simply no disposing of these emotions, and suppressing them in order to attain social good standing is mentally unhealthy. Stevenson and Wilde explore concepts put forward by Wigan and the early physiologists in order to discuss the nature of nineteenth century man and to warn against the self-sabotage young English men were encouraged to perform in order to seem pure and proper. This direct effect of scientific discourse on Victorian crime culture is addressed in the fourth chapter with a dissection of the ideology of the degeneration theorists and the effect their rhetoric had on public sentiment regarding the criminal body.

This Introduction has been an overview of the dissertation's core concerns; the following chapter details the representation of crime within the three novels on which the dissertation focuses and what theoretical approaches to them reveal.

## Chapter 2: A Picture, A Potion and Two Men Called Allan

If 'popular fiction appropriates high culture' (Zwierlein, 2016) then what does this say of the anxieties and taxonomy of Victorian murder fiction? Are we able to determine true societal fears from it and how do we separate these from the myths? In this chapter I explore *A Picture of Dorian Gray*, *The Strange case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* and Wilkie Collins' *Armadale*, in accordance with the role they play in engaging with degeneration and cleanliness theory and what place they hold in the advancement of violent crime fiction canonically. These novels in particular have been chosen for their different publication dates, popularity and prominence over time, outspoken yet dissimilar authors and for inhabiting separate genres - a science fiction story, a mystery story, and a coming of age story respectively.

In her book *City of Dreadful Delight*, Judith Walkowitz contemplates what she labels 'psychological and social crises troubling literary men and their social peers'. She lists these as 'religious self-doubt, social unrest, radical challenges to liberalism and science, anxiety over imperial and national decline' and the ever-expanding world of 'consumer culture' (Walkowitz, 1992, p.17). According to Walkowitz it is these anxieties and 'crises' that drive crime fiction toward the end of the Victorian period, that, as ever, art imitates life and holds a mirror to the social problems of the time. These three texts are products of the time in which they were written and perfectly embody these very anxieties – the characters, particularly Dorian and Midwinter, are consistently anxious in all their thoughts and actions, they are just as

scared of their own degeneration and dirtiness as the contemporary reader. Wilkie Collin's *Armadale* covers the problem of inheritance, both physiological (the murderous intent of revenge passed down to Midwinter from his father) and economic (the money and land passed down to Allan). It deals with inheritance from the previous generation to the current, the old to the new, whilst *Strange Case* adds an element of cold, indifferent science to its murder, scandal no longer being something that happens between friends and family behind closed doors but between strangers in a public street. Finally, *Picture of Dorian Gray* offers a third and more terrifying view of its crimes – that of artistic merit, a hedonistic lifestyle leading to the passionate crime of *Armadale* with the indifferent regard to consequence of *Strange Case*.

The first murder the reader is privy to in *Strange Case* is that of Sir Danvers Carew at the hands of Hyde, reported by a maid who witnessed the latter trampling and beating to death Carew with a cane. Like all crime perpetrated within the novel, application of the Orwell model of 'perfect murder' is complicated by two characters inhabiting the same body or bodies. If one is to assume, though, that Hyde is Jekyll then this act meets all criteria of the model: the novel was published in 1886 during Orwell's 'Golden Age' of English murder, the perpetrator is male and of the respectable profession of medicine, Jekyll leads what can be deemed a 'respectable life' as he regularly hosts 'pleasant dinners' consisting of 'intelligent, reputable men' (Stevenson, 1886). Indeed, the only way Jekyll's 'respectable life' appears to be compromised is in his association with Hyde by way of his will, an issue that his

lawyer, Utterson, broaches with him after one of his 'pleasant dinners'. The morals of Utterson and his ilk are so delicate that Jekyll's mere association with one such as Hyde cries scandal and creates a social rift – guilt by association seems implied by the fact that Jekyll is always sought out and held accountable for Hyde's actions in part, whether voiced or implied. Utterson visiting Jekyll after each act of violence from Hyde is not done simply due to the fact that Jekyll may be the only individual to know the location and housing situation of Hyde, but each time the doctor is sought out it is with the clear implication that he is to explain his association with such a man and to moralise or explain Hyde's behaviour. By Utterson's standards of cleanliness and sensibility it is astonishing that Jekyll would affiliate himself with a man of Hyde's lowly social class and reputation, to the point that Utterson believes Jekyll to be the victim of some blackmail on Hyde's part. It is of note that Utterson urges Jekyll to divulge the secret that he assumes Hyde holds over Jekyll, to 'make a clean breast of this in confidence', demonstrating that despite Jekyll's possibly compromising situation he is 'a man to be trusted'. As a lawyer and a friend, Utterson is potentially willing to expose himself to a sensitive and morally impure piece of information on Jekyll's behalf, so there is an air of compromise about Utterson's role of detective – he is personally and professionally involved with the subject of his investigation (Jekyll) and is even willing to forgive a socially repugnant secret that he believes is the leverage or 'position' that Hyde holds over Jekyll (Stevenson, 1886). From a reader's perspective, this could just be a way to further damn Hyde and mark him for the true villain of the narrative, that our pseudo



detective is willing to overlook minor moral infractions perpetrated by a friend, Doctor and socially respected man in order to accost the degenerate and publically hated Hyde.

The last mark of the Orwell Model is public outrage, and this incident (along with every other in the novel) certainly creates outrage, while Jekyll's connection with Hyde is initially thought to be distasteful (to the point that Utterson attempts to accost Jekyll about Hyde's inclusion in his will, a topic in itself deemed 'distasteful' as he is questioning Jekyll's personal decision on a private matter), Utterson now specifically seeks out Jekyll in order to question him on Hyde. His first stop from the crime scene is Jekyll's door, whereas previously he had politely waited till he found himself alone with the man at the end of a hosted dinner to which he was invited. Indeed, upon the identification of Carew's body, the police officer at the scene declares that 'this will make a great deal of noise', the implication being that his incredulousness at the incident and Utterson's dogged determination to hunt down Hyde is but the beginning of a long chain of reactions that will inevitably reach outside of their circle and, come morning, incite public upheaval (Stevenson, 1886).

This incident's importance to the public is a direct result of Walkowitz 'urban spectatorship', though some of the spectators in question are actually present during the crime, and as such will be more actively involved onlookers than Orwell's very passive 'man in the armchair', who is of course getting the information second hand – the crowd at the trampling and the maid at the murder are the initial passers down of knowledge, here they fulfil the role of the newspaper. Utterson seems to be

threatening some form of mob mentality, a witch hunt for Hyde that he may publically (in the eyes of the spectators if not the law) be put on trial for his sin, or that he at least will be socially marked or smeared in the same way Sir Henry fears Dorian Gray will be smeared for his first encounter with violent death. But why the hysteria? Is it because Carew is an MP, because murder makes for interesting discussion and spectatorship or because of the locale and brutality of the crime? The latter is what contributes to Utterson's disgust at Hyde, but the same disgust is shown to Armadale Senior upon his deathbed when he confesses to decades old revenge on a somewhat deserving and far from innocent rival – yet they are abhorred by their peers all the same, despite their displacement in time, brutality and motive. Thus Pittard's cleanliness theory seeps through – it is beyond specificity, of time, brutality and motive – it is an absolute, any brush with violent death, be it suicide, caning, or years old vengeance comes under the threat of what Pittard deems 'contamination', and the spectators are abhorrent and angry towards said crimes not merely because they are brutal or cruel, but because they fear association and are indignant that they have transpired or been confessed within their presence, contaminating them.

The murder of Carew is witnessed by a maid, a working-class servant, yet her sensibilities in light of this situation are the same as those of Utterson and the Officer, she even faints at the sight of such brutality, and of course she has previously 'conceived a dislike' for Hyde, the unifying opinion of our spectators. Could it be that, despite being of a lower class, she is elevated in the eyes of the

reader and her peers due to the fact that she spends her life surrounded by gentry, operating 'in the right circles' as it were, and has the all-important sense of unease towards the physical manifestation of Hyde? Certainly she is spoken of in a fond yet heavy gendered way by Utterson, who reports that she was 'romantically given' to looking out of her window (a fairly mundane practice to be spoken of so poetically), and that through this practice she felt 'at peace' and 'thought more kindly of the world', depicting her as a practically spiritual figure, above suspicion and a 'purity' to Hyde's 'impurity, though she is perhaps considered simple in these acts and description due to her gender and occupation (Stevenson, 1886, p.5).

The serving class in this novel are seen as mere furniture to our detective character, Utterson, and are used more as plot devices rather than actual characters, yet their absence in a way makes them all the more present, as Stallybrass and White put it - 'what is socially peripheral is so frequently symbolically central' (Stallybrass and White as quoted by Walkowitz, 1992, p.21). The portrayal of the lower classes in our novels is thus - Dorian Gray's valet, Victor, is only mentioned when there is unusual circumstance, much in the way that Dr Jekyll's butler Poole and his servants are only mentioned in relation to him locking himself in his room and acting suspiciously: 'the whole of the servants, men and women, stood huddled together like a flock of sheep' (Stevenson, 1886). Serving staff and employees are treated as utility and furniture for most of the novels, not even being mentioned when surely they must be in the room with our main characters (when they are dining, for

example). Even the observational and talkative Sir Henry has no comment to make of the hired help in scenes in which he is clearly being tended to, they are only mentioned when our protagonists are acting unbecoming as an indicator of unease. When Utterson likens Jekyll's servants to frightened animals, the implication is that they are scared of what they witness but ignorant to its importance - he calls them 'sheep', an animal often used to describe simple and herd-like behavior, to him the serving class are brainless and helpless in the face of danger and he literally brushes them aside. It is ironic that Utterson should be so dismissive and condescending to these people as they are in the exact same situation as him - people who inhabit Henry Jekyll's life and realize something is wrong but who fail to see the big picture and that Jekyll and Hyde share a body. It is even possible that Jekyll's servants know more than the would-be detective figure, but they are never questioned and Utterson only learns the truth by a posthumous letter when he had a potentially primary source of information available to him the entire time. The absence of these people fits into Orwell's 'perfect' story, Jekyll's servants are long suffering victims but there is nothing intriguing or scandalous about their victimhood to thrill a reader (unlike the mysterious bludgeoning of a MP), acknowledging their existence might even have caused the mystery to be solved too easily. For Walkowitz this 'paradox' of the absent yet present cumulates not in the figure of the serving class but in the figure of the prostitute, another key figure in the city scape and an example of the disenfranchised being emblematic of the time. For urban explorers and those intending to map the cityscape, the prostitute was acknowledged only when useful,

much like how the maid bore witness to the murder of Carew in *Strange Case*. Our detective is reliant on the maid, she is the sole perspective through which we view the first murder and so she acts as the lens of morality – she represents cleanliness juxtaposed to Hyde's dirtiness. The reader and spectators alike rely on this binary for context, their social rational and their prerogative moving forward with the plot, and they are willing to elevate the 'socially peripheral' to fit these circumstances, much like who the urban explorers were willing to ignore prejudice to get information from prostitutes (Walkowitz, 1992, p. 21). The 'socially peripheral' becomes visible and acknowledged only when they can no longer be ignored, the prostitutes and serving classes act as constant bystanders in real and fictional Victorian England, and are fonts of information for the reluctant higher classes.

Orwell's assumption that the perfect murder is performed by a 'little man' is intended to portray the assailant as unassuming and meek, that his body and visage are as inoffensive as his profession and way of life, and although Hyde is described as small of stature (in a way making Jekyll's figure more imposing) he is always described as having a threatening look and his body is said to be deformed and grotesque, even though it is not apparent how. Utterson's emotional reaction to Hyde's immoralities results in him needing Hyde to have a physical signifier of his inhumanity, the fact that no one can describe what it is about Hyde's physical body that disgusts them so may mean that such a malformation is coveted and sought. Imagining or creating a physical signifier, or a physical representation of a social smear brings some degree of comfort to Utterson and the spectators, they need Hyde

to be quantified and labelled in a way that fits into their rationale, that of the dirty and the clean, that of the class system and that of moral sensibilities regarding violence – they want him to look inhuman so they can feel at ease when treating him as such. Hyde defies their current parameters of what someone like him should look like, as he is dressed in Jekyll's clothes, brandishing an expensive cane, yet his facial appearance and actions juxtapose this, though said physical malformation appears to be sought after rather than seen – 'Mr. Hyde was pale and dwarfish, he gave an impression of deformity without any nameable malformation', '[nothing] could explain the hitherto unknown disgust, loathing, and fear with which Mr. Utterson regarded him' (Stevenson, 1886). Indeed, even Hyde's absence adds to this a specific categorisation of his corporeal body as otherworldly and obscene - much like 'real life urban myth of the 1880's Jack the Ripper, [Hyde] can vanish and melt into the air in the fog of London' (Walker, 2007, p.22), the mystery and fear surrounding this constructed 'labyrinth' adding to the mystery and fear surrounding real world and fictional 'Gothic villains' and their bodies - not only must Hyde be grotesque, he must also be a phantom.

The first acts of violence in each of the three novels serve as microcosms as to how crime is viewed and treated by witnesses and second hand accounts. All three of these acts involve the disgust of the onlookers, a hesitance to become involved for fear of association and the complete social exile of the perpetrator, even if the act isn't a direct murder or even a crime.

The first murder we are privy to in Wilkie Collins' *Armada* is the one that will begin the convolution and complicating factor of the plot, a deathbed confession to two complete strangers from one of the five Allan Armadales. The two strangers in question are Mr Neal, present due to being the only man at hand that could take dictation in English, and a German doctor, there to provide stimulants to keep the bedridden Armadale lucid and capable of vocalisation. Both men have two completely different demeanours towards the dying gentleman they find themselves in the presence of that night, the former being described as 'hard as iron' by the latter, and by his own admission unwilling to be present were it not for his 'word' and his 'duty' as a 'Christian' being called into question by the doctor and the dying man (Collins, 1866). The Doctor himself is associated with Armadale for self-evident reasons, but furthermore seems compassionate towards his patient, fulfilling his request of finding an English writer despite his objection that the man's wife should be the one to take down his final words. Despite the differences and indeed, distaste between the two men, the two are united in disgust for Armadale upon his confession, the barrier of nationality, personality and profession being breached by the unfaltering sensibility of the gentleman. No sooner does Armadale confess his guilt of the three-year-old murder of an 'outlaw' and conman (that neither witness met or knew of until that night) than Doctor and Writer alike share a look of mutual 'loathing' and 'dread' for their dying companion who is henceforth referred to as a 'wretch'. Murder is so heinous an act in their eyes that it is galling to them that they have been tricked into the 'confidence' of such an 'infamous secret' by Neal's

description that the two are left stunned and, curiously of all, united in their hatred of a helpless, dying man.

After the confession, Neal, cold to Armadale's plight from the beginning, is now left 'pitiless' (though the only pity he demonstrated thus far was towards Mrs Armadale anyway), whilst the Doctor, originally 'compelled' to aid Armadale in his plight and equally 'compelled' to use Mr Neal to do so, now argues the case against mailing the newly penned letter 'for the child's sake', the factor of murder completely altering his motivation which seemed so unwavering thus far. Whilst the two gentlemen's demeanours are clearly altered by the confession, and whilst common sensibility unites them in their denouncement of the dying man, both men soon return to their primary motives – nurture in the one man and steadfast resolve in the other. The Doctor assists Armadale in his last act, placing his failing hand atop his son's head whereas Neal, refusing to break his word as 'no man' could ever say he did so, mails the letter so that 'not even [Armadale] can say' he ever broke it, the phrasing by Neal rendering Armadale lesser in his vision than a 'man'. This last sentiment is the common trope of dehumanising a murderer - at once to separate them from oneself, polite society and even the species, this is akin to Pittard's 'cleansing' - a societal Victorian practice and lexical theme of distancing oneself from societal outcasts. This 'cleansing' practice involves an ideological language that creates 'connections between discourses about the criminal and a state of (im)purity', a way of distancing the perceived civilised and uncivilised (Pittard, 2011, p.1). Considering Hyde's malformation, it is curious how the criminal body is presented



within these novels, Armadale Senior is first shown to be an aged and dying man, surrounded by his loving wife and son, whom he shows affection for throughout, helping spectator, detective and reader alike to empathise with him (although the detective and point of view in this case is Mr Neal, who seems more enraptured by Armadale's wife to give us much of a description of the man himself). Armadale's disfigurement may be shown as more sympathetic as he is presented at first a respectable gentleman with infirmity, rather than a young, thuggish man with brutal and ugly features like Hyde. It is curious too, that Armadale's physicality is only truly referenced to explain his situation, his 'dry lips' his 'powerless tongue', his 'angry eyes' juxtaposed with the 'paralysed man' they belong to in order to imply impotence of body but strength of will, this is a character presented to us as determined to a fault as at times he fails to respond to Neal. Once again, the visage does not correspond with the nature of the man, a kindly father, ruffling his young son's hair as he lies on his death bed, confessing to murder. In terms of class, he is a land owner and gentry, yet a 'wretch' all the same, and so once the confession is made and the murder proclaimed, Neal curiously stops describing Armadale physically, as much like Utterson's struggling to describe Hyde's face, he cannot correspond the physicality with the nature of the man, so in need are these detectives of a stalwart moral binary and physical signifiers of it (Collins, 1866, p.6).

The first violent death the reader is privy to in *Picture* is not one of murderous intent but one of suicide (that will later create murderous intent). After Dorian Gray deserts her and professes that '[she] is nothing to [him] now' (Wilde, 1890, p.81)

Sybil Vane drinks what Lord Henry guesses to be prussic acid, killing her instantly. The following morning these events are revealed to both Dorian and the reader by Lord Henry, who takes both of Dorian's hands to deliver the initial shocking news, but quickly devolves into idle observations that 'things like this make a man fashionable in Paris, but in London they are so prejudiced' (Wilde, 1890, p.92). He is also quick to bring up the word 'scandal', and even asks if anyone saw Dorian leave Sybil's dressing room, quick to make sure his friend is as removed from this event as possible due to the 'inquiry' being made. Much like in *Strange Case*, the talk switches quickly from the events of the death to the public reaction to it, once the very base details are covered the importance is removed from the victim and circumstance to the culprit and social reaction they will incur. Dorian too soon shifts focus from the victim to himself, asking Henry 'am I heartless?' he is concerned not of the death but of his indifference to it, Henry reassuring him that life's tragedies usually have a 'brute force' to them' and that, because of the dramatic nature of Sybil's death and his connection to it, he is bound to feel passive, that 'suddenly we find that we are no longer the actors, but the spectators of the play'. This event's relevance to the rest of the novel echoes in Dorian's fret that 'there is nothing to keep me straight', Dorian fears that with the absence of Sybil (and soon the absence of Basil) Dorian's cruel streak will grow unbound. As ever, Lord Henry excuses and scoffs at any guilt or involvement Dorian might feel '[I have] murdered her as surely as I had cut her little throat with a knife' and excuses Dorian's secondary reaction of distance and vague indifference, as Henry always sees such moral conundrums as beneath him and

particularly below Dorian due to his youth and beauty. Here the class and clientele of the theatre may also play a part in Henry's ruling of the situation, previously referred to as 'these common, rough people, with their coarse faces and brutal gestures', it is likely that if Sybil belonged to a more moneyed family or acted at a more refined establishment Henry would not be so quick to brush aside consequence (Wilde, 1890, p.76).

Hyde's attack on an MP is framed as a brute from the lower classes attacking a man of the lower gentry, and is treated with severity for its breaching of class boundaries as its criminality, similarly Dorian's hand in Sybil's death would reflect badly on him not due to actually contributing to the death of a young woman, but that Dorian could get caught up in the politics of the lower classes. Sybil's family is always referred to as poor, her mother owing debts to the theatre's owner, Mr Isaacs, who himself is always referred to by Dorian as 'the Jew', and he constantly reminds Henry of just how repulsive he finds the man for no particular reason other than he is earnest and speaks frankly. Whilst the Orwell Model factors in public wants and sensibilities it does not take into account racial bias – is the murderous Dorian at the end of the novel equal in social standing to Mr Isaacs, whose only scandalous act is to simply be a Jewish man in London? Dorian's crimes fit the Orwell Model in all but his class - the time, gender, public standing and public outrage factors are all applicable to his circumstance. Another complicating factor is the nature of Sybil's death – suicide. From Henry's remark of the 'fashionable man' we can infer that be it murder or suicide, any involvement on Dorian's part creates a

certain taint as far as his reputation and social standing are concerned, in fact, this instance reveals just how irrelevant the mode and method of death is in the eyes of the public and in relation to the Model, and violent death or unseemly incident appears to carry with it exactly the same consequence. 'Scandal' is a word brought up within the same speech that conveyed the death to Dorian and reader, cementing the tie between event and public reaction, much like the first death/murder in *Strange Case* being immediately stipulated to make a 'great deal' of 'public noise', the language and connection and concern are the same in both. Henry speaks out of concern for Dorian when acknowledging public reaction and the attending officer laments over the impending and inescapable nature of it in regards to his job, but no matter the motive or position of the speaker, they both immediately place each death in a larger – public – context and sphere. The deaths themselves are nothing alike in nature, one suicide by ingestion of an unknown substance and one a brutal caning to death told via proxy of an emotionally compromised bystander. Yet the conclusions are the same, that such extraordinary (and suspicious) events could take place with even the slightest connection to a gentleman of modest renown is in itself scandalous. Sir Henry, after some research, finds that Dorian 'should have a great pot of money waiting for him' thanks to his grandfather, and that 'his mother had money too' despite running away with a 'penniless young fellow' (Wilde, 1890, p.). Equally, we learn from Utterson that Jekyll's social standing is considered 'the very pink of the proprieties, celebrated' and that he is 'a fellow who [does] good' (Stevenson, 1886). Dorian is too young and moneyed to work, whilst Jekyll holds a

vocation that he pours his hours into, even so both are held in a sort of 'untouchable' part of the class structure that should not and cannot (in the eyes of their peers) be involved in crime, Dorian is seen as untouched and pure ('he has a simple and beautiful nature, don't spoil him' (Wilde, 1891, p.17)) and Jekyll is even acknowledged as 'doing good', a plain statement of his positive effect on society.

Much like Jekyll, Dorian cannot under any circumstances be accused of murder least it upset the status quo by having these seemingly 'untouchable' men becoming impure. In the first event Hyde is clearly the perpetrator and in the second it has been concluded that Sybil took her own life, but tenuous connections of Jekyll knowing Hyde, of Dorian visiting Sybil and of Midwinter being the son of a murderer in *Armadale*, is enough to damage each man's reputation, no matter how noble their birth. Midwinter's parentage and respectable background are never on the same level as Dorian's and Jekyll's however, for he is immediately distrusted by Mr Brock for being black - 'The rector's Anglo-Saxon flesh crept at responsively at every casual movement of the usher's supple brown fingers' (Collins, 1866, p.5), though Midwinter turns out to be a red herring, so his character arc differs from Hyde and Dorian, despite him being introduced as our supposed villain (and indeed, believing himself to be for much of his journey). For Midwinter, knowing he is son to a murderer weighs heavy on his conscience, not for fear of his father going to jail, for it was a deathbed confession, and not even fear for his father's immortal soul in a Christian sense (much as Mr Neal fears), but it is a fear of infection that drives Midwinter to shame and confession, in the presence of Mr Brock. In this

chapter 'The Man Revealed', the character of Midwinter perfectly demonstrates the effectiveness and implementation of Pittard's literary language of 'contamination' in Victorian culture – against all fact and better reasoning, despite the fact that they are fast friends and have only the highest respect for each other, Midwinter believes he is destined to cause the death of Allan Armadale Junior just as his father murdered Allan Senior, the letter containing his father's deathbed confession of this haunting his friendship - 'I lifted myself at last above the influence of this horrible letter [with] my love for Allan Armadale' (Collins, 1866).

Both *Strange Case* and *Armadale*'s first violent acts are reported by a source that was at the scene, the receiver of the stories being shocked and in the case of Mr Neal, displaying a revulsion at being included in the retelling, not wishing to become a part of the narrative. This strain of logic follows through to *Picture* where Dorian is warned by his friend that he may find himself ostracized from society for merely being associated with a young woman who went on to kill herself, this line of reasoning does not always form the dirty/clean binary but it is clearly an integrated, established way of thinking for the inhabitants of all three novels. These unwritten rules are broken only by the uninitiated, the working class onlookers at Hyde's trampling who are already implicated and don't seem to be particularly bothered by the social implications as they are by the human being that has been violently assaulted before their eyes. Midwinter also appears to be unconcerned by all but the human element, his concern about becoming his father isn't that it will affect his

social standing but his personal morality and the safety of his friend Allan Armadale.

*Armadale* is a novel of inheritance, the two main characters, the two living Allan Armadales, are knowingly and unknowingly operating under the shadows of their fathers. For Midwinter this is a deep rooted fear, ironically one he inherited from his father's deathbed letter to him 'his superstition was my superstition' – it is fear of contamination that drives him, much like it is contamination that Dorian initially fears at Sybil's death. Throughout *Picture*, Dorian commits various violent acts, and while the first few have him fearful of impurity he later seems impervious to its effects due to his own rationalisations and Sir Henry's rhetoric (accusing Basil 'you taught me to be vain of my good looks' shortly before murdering him and saying of the portrait that 'it has destroyed me', referring to his morality (Wilde, 1891, p.142)), Jekyll too seems not to merit fear of contamination, he dissuades Utterson at first in his connection to Hyde, assuring him that being affiliated with such a man is no real problem – quite a flabbergasting thought for his friend Utterson who seeks to secure Jekyll purity by disassociating the two. Later, Jekyll seems to combat the inescapable social 'contamination' by becoming a hermit and not partaking of society at all, therefore not having to adhere to the conventions of his dinner guests and the pressure from Utterson to disband Jekyll and Hyde. It is fear of contamination that hangs over every event of violent occurrence or death in all three of these novels.

These events confirm public anxiety in regards to Adshead's 'decency' and degeneration theory - once certain moral qualities are lost they are never and can never be regained. In these novels, we are presented with innocence in three forms; the pure, childlike innocence in Allan and his trusting nature, the false innocence of Jekyll as he indulges through the guise of another and lastly the corrupted innocence of Dorian as he falls prey to the insecurities roused by his friend. As a reformer and pamphlet writer, Adshead presented had a clear, singular definition of innocence, he poised 'decency' as a finite resource that the English public were running out of, his warnings against and commodification of the criminal body correlating with degeneration hysteria. When discussing the figure and role of the detective, Pittard states that 'the early history of detective fiction is one of convincing a suspicious middle class that they were not criminals by association' (Pittard, 2011, p.185). That here is a character who can not only solve the practical problem of a criminal case, but also quantify the moral and purity dilemma – the judgement of the detective made the innocent reader feel clean. The fact that none of the detective figures in these three novels are ever addressed as such explains the anxiety surrounding the characters – Mr Brock worries for young Allan, Basil worries about Dorian and Utterson worries for Jekyll, again, these anxieties are mostly based around their friends and charge's moralities and depravities rather than their physical and mental well-being. These men do not have the official title or position of an authoritarian figure who may sort right from wrong, bystanders (and the 'detectives' themselves) still feel guilty, or 'dirty', by association (the deathbed confession in *Armadale* being



met with revulsion, Hyde's actions resulting in regular visits to Jekyll's door, Dorian being seen with a girl who later committed suicide automatically having implications). Basil even revokes his probing questions of Dorian, assuring himself in a moment of self-doubt that 'after all, what right had he to pry into the life of Dorian Gray?' (Wilde, 1891, p.140), at the time this thought occurs to him it is too late, his line of investigation has led him not to resolution and establishment of purity, but to his death and further impurity of Dorian. The total failure of Basil as detective cumulates in his interrogation being the catalyst for Dorian's first murder, as all previous acts on Dorian's part have been mostly scandalous rather than criminal, but the fear of scandal over socially unacceptable behaviour directly leads Dorian to criminal behaviour. Basil laments that Lady Gwendolen is now ostracised, 'even her own children are not allowed to live with her', that until her involvement with Dorian 'not a breath of scandal had ever touched her' (Wilde, 1891, p.138), Dorian is so tired of people like Basil meddling in his life that he leads him into a closet and stabs him. Through their judgement and social shaming Orwell's man in the armchair and all his fellow spectators have created what they sought – a gentleman murderer.

All three novels have detective-like figures that perform the role in logically reasoning their way to solutions and answers, the lack of official status/profession means they can never deliver the most important moral factor of a detective – comfort. Comfort is not a moral quality, but moral 'wholeness' brings comfort to middleclass readers, an absolute morality that can only be delivered by the law or, in

the three novels case, our stand in detectives, Utterson, Basil, Mr Neal and Mr Brock (this is not to be confused with 'wholesomeness' which is a more abstract and adjective term, not an absolute. Much like the fabled 'parlour scene', so too do our stand ins directly confront the murders, though structurally and narratively complicated, Basil's confrontation of Dorian ends with him becoming a victim, Mr Brock's confrontation of Midwinter reveals him to be a sympathetic and plagued character who is in constant moral self-confrontation and assessment, who indeed takes Mr Brock's place as detective in many ways, certainly as Young Allan's custodian and protector. Mr Neal's confrontation of the murderer Armadale Senior, Midwinter's father, isn't even planned, an unconsented confession is forced upon him and he is purely reactionary, even respecting the murderer's final wish as a mark of own personal honour, despite openly calling him a 'wretch' and dehumanising him. Lastly, our final detective stand-in, Mr Utterson, fits the role more closely than any other - he doggedly tracks down Hyde by way of Jekyll on multiple occasions, questions witnesses and even confronts Jekyll in his own parlour. Not only is he the perfect detective in his actions, but also thematically, as he delivers righteous, lawful morality and establishes the dirty/clean binary during every scene. Despite these qualifications, he ultimately fails to save Jekyll from himself, fails to unveil the mystery, fails to save any lives, and ultimately fails to fill the role of detective, useful not to any of the characters of the tale but to the reader for his perspective. The Orwell Model fails to quantify if the killer actually needs to be caught, his identity being of more consequence than any prison sentence or

justice, so perhaps Utterson's incompetence and impotence is of little consequence given that the mystery gets solved regardless.

It may be that the chief reason that none of these novels were ever categorised as detective fiction is not because the stand ins aren't part of the police force - 'when detectives do achieve the status of fictional heroes –such as Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes – they are rarely agents of the state', but because they fail to fulfil the roles for which they act as surrogate (Guy and Small, 2011, p.29). Like typical 'hero detectives', our surrogates are beacons of morality, social judges and bastions of sensibility that bring comfort to reader and spectator alike, but in the end that is all that they can provide - given the deaths of Jekyll, Dorian, Lydia and all of their victims it may well be that their respective authors thought that this small commodity of 'comfort' by way of social prejudice was simply not enough to save anybody from themselves or each other. Much like real world detectives Mr Utterson, Mr Brock and Mr Neal are all commenting on events that have already transpired, their moral judgments come too late to save anyone's life or morality. Spectatorship, sensibility and the struggle for cleanliness against the threat of degeneration are all shown to be impotent or even dangerous acts within these novels, cumulating in Orwell's man on the sofa reading about murder in the most passive and inactive method possible. Orwell's man sits alone, reading rather than discussing or gossiping about crime – it is pure entertainment and schadenfreude which he is completely uninvolved with on a personal level.

Pittard asserts detective fiction as a form of 'purity', a calming and cleaning reaction to its 'counterpart', the 'lurid tales of crime' printed in 'cheap newspapers' and he cites Florence Bell's 1907 'investigation into popular culture in an industrial society' as proof of this literary and societal juxtaposition. The absence of an appointed authority in these novels places them in morally ambiguous space between these two forms, like the newspapers they address degeneration and acts of crime without offering the clean and concise answer to them given by detective fiction (Pittard, 2011). These newspapers offer a sort of comfort in the chaos, Orwell's *News of the World* reader being assured that the world around them is dangerous and interesting as they 'put [their] feet up on the sofa' with 'a cup of mahogany brown tea', but these three novels offer no such caveat of comfort in their sordid tales and instead root them in common human psychology, wants and needs. Jekyll, Allan Senior and Dorian may have made for an exciting romp of a story in the 'cheap newspapers', but in their respective novels they are: a man who seeks freedom from his societal confines and the petty shackles of sensibility, a man who seeks revenge on a conman for a stolen love and life and a man who fears what all youth must face – age.

Whilst the novels speak in the language of their contemporary society and talk of purity and dirtiness, inherent criminality and class associated traits, they use these conceits to transcend the binary morality of the contemporary fiction, conforming neither to the excitable sordidness of the newspapers nor the moral notions of cleanliness found in detective fiction. They humanise their murderers and

make them neither working class revolutionaries nor lower gentry inheritance robbers, the character that comes closest to one of these stock archetypes is Lydia in her attempts to seize the Armadale money and estate, this nefarious and seemingly simplistic villain-hood revoked when she kills herself upon being confronted with overwhelming emotion towards the people whose lives she has preying on.

Armadale seems very much a novel caught between ages, it has the hallmarks of an early nineteenth century sensation novel but the morality of a fin de siècle mystery, there are no affairs concocted by an inhuman villain like in the 1806 Gothic Romance *Zofloya* but instead its two most suspicious and mistrusted characters, Midwinter and Lydia are just misunderstood people trying to escape their past.

As Raymond Chapman, author of *The Victorian Debate* put it – ‘the growth of realism in fiction came partly from the desire of that serious-minded age not to waste time on triviality. If the novel taught something about the “real” world, where problems were pressing hard from all sides, reading novels did not seem such a frivolous activity’ (Chapman, p.171). If detective fiction was thought to be part of a boom in realism fiction as a transition from the sensational novels of the first half of this century, *Picture* and *Strange Case* can be seen as the latest and most exemplary forms of this, in that they lack the moral binary of detective fiction.

The novels not only shirk Orwell’s model but also his proposed purpose for murder fiction of the time – comforting the reader by distancing them from the subject matter, cerebrally and geographically in the newspapers or morally in ‘educated’ novels (Pittard quoting Bell, 2011, p.106). The authorial tone of *Picture*

strikes close to that of Orwell *Decline of English Murder*, indeed its intent seems one and the same, a criticism of the practices of those in society explored through the author's humour at their absurdity yet love for their practitioners. While Orwell may be raising a keen eyebrow about the News of the World reader's murder obsession, he recognises its cultural importance and the futility of abhorring such a practice, for 'naturally' they want to read about murder, it is too ingrained into English culture, and Orwell is much more interested in answering the question of why that is rather than dismissing the practice. Orwell's general conclusion as to the popularity of such stories is that 'the old domestic poisoning dramas' are 'products of [a] stable society' 'that ensures that crimes as serious as murder [at least] have a strong emotion behind them', decrying American murders such as the famous 'Cleft Chin' murder as a 'meaningless story' with no depth of feeling in it'. In this Orwell is claiming that Victorian crime was inherently emotional and therefore more of a relatable story, this is perhaps why motive is so central to his model of the 'perfect' murder story as motive serves as yet another tantalising detail to be revealed and it also reminds us that the perpetrators are flawed humans rather than bogey men. Orwell and his man on the sofa are more engaged with class based crimes as there is a moral to be learnt and a societal problem that might be highlighted by the tragedy, Orwell can't seem to begrudge his man on the sofa as he feels there is something to be gained in the telling and retelling of these stories (Orwell, 1946). This is exactly why the characters of Jekyll and Dorian are so tragic, the motives for their actions are far from virtuous but they are relatable crisis of self and there is an underlying implication that their

actions could have been prevented. Wilde's famous wit and observation is fuelled into his characters, much like Orwell's writing his tone is far from sombre despite the nature of the story and much like Orwell there exists a sort of fondness between the author and his created subjects. Like the man on the sofa the characters of Basil and Sir Henry serve as cultural archetypes, they are parlour philosophers of the highest order, certain characters within the story even occasionally chiding Sir Henry for his monologues ('you talk books away, why don't you write one?' (Wilde, 1891, p.42)). These comments seem to indicate a level of self-awareness and self-criticism of the author himself, given that this is the only novel he ever published. The concept of the celebrity writer, whose personal life is documented as much as their art is a common notion of the twenty first century, but at the time, Wilde set something of a new precedent 'figures such as Wilde who thrived on self-publicity often strived to be the architect of their own celebrity' (Guys and Small, 2011, p.113). The biggest criticism of the ethics of the novel cumulates in Basil and Henry's protégé, Dorian, for it is them that fill the carefree youth's head with wild notions. Stevenson and Collins too, are voices that cannot be removed from their stories, as the former made Jekyll a man in two parts to explore the duality of the gentleman and the latter is the only one of our three authors to make multiple contributions to detective fiction, bridging the canonical gap between Poe and Doyle. As Sweet says 'the frantic mass consumption of novelty was one of the defining qualities of the nineteenth century experience' (Sweet, 2011, p.4).

Considering all of this fictional material, how do Orwell's real world poisonings match up to the murders that take place in these novels? The main difference seems to be in the acts themselves, whereas the poisonings orchestrated by Dr Robert Palmer were subtle acts, every instance of crime in the novels appear as unplanned brutal acts of passion – Hyde canes a man to death, Dorian stabs Basil repeatedly, Midwinter's father knowingly drowns a man. These acts are done in the heat of the moment, none of them are premeditated like that of the gentleman poisoner, nor are they the contrived murders of early nineteenth century romance fiction – they are more simplistic than their peers (we learn who the murderer is straight away) so that complexity can be explored within the characters and the emotion (or indifference) they feel towards their victims. This brings us to motive – Dr Palmer, his contemporary murderers and the romantic novel murderers all killed for monetary gain or to escape debt, but Armadale kills for revenge over a spurned love, Dorian kills because Basil denounces his morally grey lifestyle and Hyde kills simply out of violent impulse. These are passionate characters, and there is a great conflict of interest in reading their stories, for they are not cold calculated killers but emotional beings that we can empathise with, Dorian chooses the wrong path, Jekyll yearns to vent his suppressed feeling and Armadale wants revenge for a bride stolen – these are understandable motives that seem so much less malevolent or inhuman than the gentleman who slips substances into his colleague's drinks.

Jekyll is particularly interesting as he is a doctor who murders in the night – a clear reference to the supposed identity of Jack the Ripper, who was reported to



have used surgical tools on his victims, Jekyll is also a poisoner of sorts – he kills himself by drinking the elixir, but why this caused his death is left to the imagination. Whilst Jekyll embodies these aspects of the ‘gaslight ghoul’ and the gentleman poisoner, it must be noted that neither of these traits intersect with the crimes he commits, all of Hyde’s acts of violence are blunt and physical, and he demonstrates as little interest in the bodies of his victims when they are dead as when they were alive, indeed the girl who he tramples at the start of the novel has this inflicted upon her simply because she got in his way. In this regard, we might consider that Stevenson was parodying these real world murderers, that he felt his novels needed someone more passionate and brutal in order to engage with the emotions of the reader, rather than a cold indifferent man who could only ever be seen as a villain, in this way, Stevenson gave his murderer more dimension and humanity than the real world counterparts ever had or deserved. Through this juxtaposition, it may be that Stevenson did not want his readership to sympathise with all murderers, but rather through this novel he wished to impress upon them that not all criminals were the inhuman ghouls they read of in the newspaper, devoid of any empathetic plights and traits.

Already, we can observe a clear distinction between the way murder is portrayed in *Strange Case* and *Picture* and *Armada*. Coming long before the other two, Wilkie Collin’s novel has much more of the mystery of the romantic novel about it, the violent crime in our other two novels being brutal and purely reactionary, but all accounts in *Armada* are reported to us with missing

information from second hand sources. Whilst the murder of the MP Carew is told to us second hand in *Strange Case*, the level of detail in the discretion of the act and the involvement of an eye witness make it feel that much more visceral and tangible, as opposed to the mysterious deaths in Armadale that happen far away and are told to young Allan in the context of his inheritance, rather than being of import themselves.

Orwell's man on the sofa is depicted in a domestic, 'blissful' setting, wife and children asleep, and settling down after a hard day's work and a hearty family meal, so why does he then 'naturally' gravitate to that which is surely the opposite of blissful - danger? Clearly Orwell himself finds this juxtaposition amusing, he recognises that this act too is a form of comfort, even pleasurable as he lists his chosen cases for being 'the murders that have given the greatest amount of pleasure to the British public' (Orwell, 1946, pg1). Whilst the essay is particularly sardonic towards the way consumers treat murder (it opens with 'It is a Sunday afternoon, preferably before the war', his light-hearted reference to the First World War setting a witty tone), soon Orwell's true interest and intent is established – a schema of famous murders. 'One can construct what would be a *News of the World* reader's perfect murder', Orwell's perspective on the matter is always from the reader of the 'cheap papers', the novels and literature on the matter coming secondary, though he notes that they would make a 'considerable library'. Orwell then breaks his named examples (Dr. Palmer of Rugely, Jack the Ripper, Neill Cream, Mrs. Maybrick, Dr. Crippen, Seddon, Joseph Smith, Armstrong, and Bywaters and Thompson) down

into those which were poisoning cases (six) and which of those ten criminals belonged to the middle class (eight), categorising in order to find commonality and to establish just how popular certain aspects of these cases were (Orwell, 1946, p.1). Orwell's ruminations on what the British public 'want' in murder narrative are understandably focused on specific detail, a literal checklist with which he compares real world homicides, and by observing Sweet's 'myth's' and Danahay's idea of the 'criminal body' we can find that they offer complicating factors to this purposefully simplistic framework by questioning perception and class representation respectively. Critics like Walkowitz offer not merely a complication to Orwell's examples but one of the grandest oversights in the way we talk about Victorian crime narrative - the complete and striking absence of active female voices. Like Orwell, she is focused not on the spectacle of crime itself, but the culture around it, what she calls 'urban spectatorship', and while it is true that female characters are often participants in crime narrative, their nonfiction counterparts are left unrecalled in Orwell's supposedly emblematic depiction of popular crime. Matthew Sweet reads Orwell's essay as a way of suggesting 'that killing was a genteel art form at which the English had once excelled but which had been lost along with the Empire', that, just as Wilde's murder filled *Picture* engages with the aesthetic movement, 'murder was something the Victorians did with style' (Sweet, 2011, p.75).

Victorians, by Orwell's estimation, coveted the story of the hypocritical or scandalous murder, that a gentleman of the 'professional class', someone who

sought out upward social mobility, could be at heart a depraved sycophant capable of gruesome acts spoke to the Victorian anxiety of the frailty of civilisation. This anxiety was that, no matter the grandeurs of the city scape and the capabilities offered by industrialisation, that the English gentleman is, at heart, no more than a savage in fancy clothes, and that no matter humanity's advances we would always be one action away from acting out primitive instincts. Both nineteenth and twentieth century readers created the myth of what Matthew Sweet deems the 'dark underworld' (Sweet, 2011, p.1) of Victorian London, and while it no doubt existed in some form, its depiction in literature is a focused and singular one, that it lurked beneath polite society, that the two interacted such as in *Suicide Club*, another Stevenson novel in which he 'had already begun to explore the themes of duplicity and the types of criminality found in the respectable world (Clarke, 2014, p.19), where two patrons of a gentleman's social club soon find themselves transported on a macabre adventure that 'serves as a reminder that criminality is not only the provenance of London's lower classes (Clarke, 2014, p.19). The view of Victorian London as a 'dark underworld' is now a staple of both modern pop culture and modern literary criticism - Judith Walkowitz, in her book *City of Dreadful Delight* states that this depiction was made by 'middle class men' and sought to find juxtaposition of 'high and low life', essentially finding a place for the middle class in a newly industrialised world (Walkowitz, 1992, p.18). Walkowitz explains that 'these practices presupposed a privileged male subject whose identity was stable [and] coherent', that they focused on establishing the 'low-other' both as a form of

mysticism to make the city seem exciting and as a way of reaffirming the wealthy's idea of themselves when juxtaposed against this demonised poor (Walkowitz, 1992, pg16).

Our protagonists, Jekyll and Dorian, could hardly be constituted as having 'stable or coherent' identities, and so if they are not the ones who map, the spectators, then they must be the ones who are spectated, the 'low-other' occupying the bodies of previously respectable men, Stevenson and Wilde seemingly wishing to complicate this 'juxtaposition' carried out by urban spectators. It was and is still a way in which literature injects mystery into crime and the mundane, once again to toy with the anxieties of readers. As Walkowitz puts it, 'The literary construct of the metropolis as a dark, powerful, and seductive labyrinth held a powerful sway over the social imagination of educated readers' (Walkowitz, 1992, Page 17). Matthew Sweet, an expert on myths and falsified narratives, comments on how it would seem in 'bad taste' to talk of Dr Shipman's murders (a twentieth century serial killer) in the clamorous and glamorous way we talk of Dr Palmer's (a nineteenth century poisoner), but, due to the mystification surrounding the era (and, naturally, a distance in time resulting in Dr Palmer's victims having no immediate relatives) Dr Palmer's murders are regaled as an intriguing and entertaining narrative rather than a tragedy. Walkowitz confirms that this 'seductive labyrinth', 'remained the dominant representation of London in the 1880's', and Sweet refers to this continuing with twentieth century audiences as 'the labyrinth' is 'conveyed to many

reading publics through high and lowbrow literary forms' (Walkowitz, 1992, p. 17.). Some of these forms are Pittard's 'cheap newspapers', which would be succeeded by Orwell's *News of the World* reader - the middle class equivalent being what Bell ironically calls the 'educated novels', ironic being that they discussed and explored the exact same subject matter in an equally sensational way to their consumers as the 'cheap newspaper's (Bell as quoted by Pittard, 2011, p.2). Thus we have a literary canon of non-fiction crime discussed in the same lexical manner across generations and class divides, breeding a specific way in which the British public discuss and view crime.

Walkowitz dissects a particular take on London as a 'dark continent that is within easy walking distance of the general post office' through the journal of George Sims, a nineteenth century 'London explorer' - a wealthy writer who would write journals on urban environments. Walkowitz comments that 'in an age of exploration and empire [urban explorers felt] the greatest mysteries lay at home', but that rather than being romantic they displayed rather ignorant and classist views of the cityscape in their journals in order to enthrall readers. Walkowitz concludes that Sims likening London to an untamed and unknowable land perhaps says more about the man than the city he maps this view onto. This rather mystic view of the cityscape lies at the heart of comfort theory - the idea that one is surrounded by novelty and mystery but that the danger is just far away enough to feel safe, it is also views like this that contribute to the myth of what Walkowitz's terms the 'seductive

labyrinth' (Walkowitz, 1992, p. 27). This mystification of London streets came about not merely by newspapers, Penny Dreadful and popular novels, but by actual accounts of a literal 'man on the streets' (though importantly not of the streets, an ignorant outsider's perspective) but this fictionalisation of physical spaces had to originate somewhere, and that origin is laid out in Booth's maps. In his *Inquiry into Life and Labour in London*, Charles Booth detailed 'class maps' of the city showing the geographic locations of residents based on each household's income. Among many other uses, these maps have served to demonstrate just how compact living quarters were in the time between 1886 -1903, the poorest of the lower classes (categorised with criminals by Booth) living mere streets away from the wealthiest.

The areas of inhabited by lowest class on Booth's map (denoted by black) appear in small clusters – hidden away from highstreets and places of trade and entertainment, this serve segregation in such a small amount of ground is the real world equivalent of the only slightly fictionalised *Jago* by Arthur Morrison, and the housing of the unemployed depicted by Elizabeth Gaskell in *Mary Barton*, again partially based on Gaskells real world experience of urban exploration in Manchester – 'Gaskell probably had the greatest first-hand knowledge of poverty, [yet still] used the records of the Manchester Unitarian Mission Society to support her evidence' (Flint, 1987, p.4). This practice undertaken by urban explorers of warping the physical reality of the city which they witness into a 'dark continent' for their readers has multiple purposes. Firstly, there is the obvious practice of creating

fictions to sell media such as Victorian Bogeyman Spring Heeled Jack (a fictional character made of English folklore sometimes used by parents to scare children into good behaviour) being created to sell Penny Dreadfuls. Then there are the figures of George Sims who seem to believe their own fabrications as it confirms all their classist fears – that London is dangerous due to the poor and that this is simultaneously exciting and terrifying, a truly voyeuristic approach to the dilapidated living conditions of the poor. It is this same voyeuristic nature that spurs on Orwells man on the sofa that popularises scandal as the reader is presupposed to be above it all – clean compared to the social dirtiness of the individuals they are reading about, as we see in the following chapter when discussing Pittard. Yet there is a third form of this construction of the dark continent, not necessarily based on consumerism or classist views but simply a product of the passing of time – it is this form of myth making that Sweet focuses on, the seemingly inevitable and purposeless misrepresentation of Victorian London and its criminal activity, although according to him there may yet be an agenda behind this too. Walkowitz explains that these practices came as a result of urban explorers being ‘compelled to possess a comprehensive knowledge of the Other’ (Walkowitz, 1992, p.20), and that these ‘explorers’ were cannibalising colonialist terminology and views and turning them upon London itself, both to demonise those thought to be dangerous and to solidify their own identities against it.



This 'stable and coherent' identity is something that Stevenson and Wilde saw as performative and sought to question in their respective novels, Stevenson saying of his work that he had 'long been trying to write a story [about] man's double being' (Stevenson as quoted by Danahay, 2013, p.24) and so we see Jekyll's 'wicked' and 'honourable' sides 'housed in separate bodies' (Stevenson). Jekyll's account of his situation is perhaps misleading, as 'the transformation...is not simply a process by which the good doctor is overtaken by an evil doppelganger', (Clarke, 2014, p.20) but rather a way for Jekyll to escape his own pressured and commodified body and the judgement that it was inflicted with, the burden of being the 'fellow' who 'does good' (Stevenson, 1886, p.5). In order to maintain the aura of a gentleman and maintain purity, society demanded a certain level of inaction, a point of great contention and anxiety for any young bachelor no doubt, and an anxiety that is addressed in both *Picture* and *Strange Case* from the start. In order to preserve his beauty Dorian literally has to remain in stasis in the form of his portrait, a static image that remains pure because it doesn't act and therefore doesn't age or become contaminated. Jekyll too must be seen to be in a state of in action in order to maintain status quo – during Hyde's first excursions the good Doctor can still be observed hosting his usual dinner parties, the routine of the gentleman never changing or wavering, which breaks down over the course of the novel revealing the façade, which is ultimately what Stevenson and Wilde report the gentleman to be – a public image that acts as a jailhouse to the emotional human being underneath.

Sweet's chief argument in his book *Inventing the Victorians* is that the twentieth century proprietors of pop culture (and indeed we as consumers of it) have been taking part in a mutual 'misreading of [the Victorians] culture, history and lives – perhaps deliberately in order to satisfy our sense of ourselves as liberated Moderns' (Sweet, 2011, p. 1). The march of time creates these gaps in knowledge and misrepresentation, yet Sweet would have us believe that we are more akin to George Sims and are purposeful rather than native by partaking in this misreading. This 'misreading', borne from historical inaccuracy and secondary sources is something that the Victorians themselves took part in within the very same mediums of the twentieth century ('educated novels' and 'cheap newspapers'), transforming the concept of the city scape into Walkowitz's 'seductive labyrinth' in order to establish a sense of 'otherness' between oneself (the consumer middle class) and the criminals and poor that inhabited London's streets (according to Booth's class maps and many other accounts and previously stated accounts). Such a separation between twentieth century people and the Victorians creates the emboldening 'liberated moderns' narrative in the very same way the Victorians established the 'dirty/clean' narratives within their fictions and a matrix or schema of sensibility. Much like those reading Sims' publication at the time, the twentieth century reader worries less of the consequences of this poverty, for it is presented in this manner not to foster sympathy but fear of the poor – crime, death and poverty lie at the centre of so many of these narratives, transformed by a misplaced sense of adventure and mystery - Engels writes that 'when society places hundreds of proletarians in such a

position that they inevitably meet a too early and unnatural death, one in which is quite as much a death by violence as that by the sword or bullet...its deed is murder just as surely as the deed of a single individual' (Engels, 1845, p. 95).

What Walkowitz calls urban spectatorship, Sweet specifies as the 'sensation seekers', the Victorian consumer who craved the next popular novelty. By the end of this paper I shall have referred to the Victorian consumer masses by many names, the 'urban spectators', 'sensation seekers', readers of the 'cheap newspapers' and 'educated novels', but is important to contextualise that whilst they occupy different classes these are one and the same people – the British public, and as Sweet so affectionately puts it – 'The Victorians shaped our lives and sensibilities in countless unacknowledged ways, they are still with us, walking our pavements, drinking in our bars, living in our houses, reading our newspapers, inhabiting our bodies' (Sweet, 2011, p.23).

Simon Joyce, much like Sweet and Walkowitz, aims to undo some of the myths surrounding Victorian social politics - he states in his essay *Sexual Politics and the Aesthetics of Crime* that there was a myth of a 'privileged offender' - a type of criminal that only existed in fictional worlds such as Wilde's *Picture*. Joyce addresses the issue that Dorian's reality may be his alone, with no criminal counterparts outside of fiction. Through Joyce's writing we can see that the mythification of London's denizens was not merely a weaponised classist narrative as Walkowitz describes or the reassuring ideal of twentieth century readers as 'liberated moderns'

discussed by Sweet- it was also a form of other-ing that the Victorians transposed onto their peers. Joyce's 'privileged offender' is a member of the landless gentry or the middle class who broke law and status quo, once more employing social and mental distance in order to foster difference. Here we might find an answer to our first question – why do we, and the Victorians, yearn to read of grizzly murder when surrounded by more comforting surroundings like Orwell's man on the sofa? With *Picture*, Wilde wrote of the carnal nature that dwells within every person, that civility is a form of façade - but if certain readers only took away the notion that some members of the rich might be secret degenerates and criminals then for them this text would have been ironically comforting as they could assure themselves of their moral superiority.

In *Picture* Wilde addresses unsettling truths about the nature of civility as social performance, but if such literature created cultural myths like Joyce's 'privileged offender', then the text may have had opposite effect intended. By Joyce's estimation, middle class readers would have found themselves comforted as they imagined the sensational secret lives of the rich, the tale vindicating their notions of superiority rather than having them ponder the existential questions *Picture* poses, the reader may simply have judged themselves as 'clean' and the subject of the writing, the offender, 'dirty'. As Joyce himself puts it – 'the idea of an aesthetic of crime had begun to pick up steam again about 40 years after De Quincey, in part as a response to falling crime rates' (Joyce, 2002, p.501), here he addresses an artistic movement at the heart of *Picture*, aestheticism, but also the less well

documented phenomenon of public and aristocratic obsession with violence in response to a diminishment of it, as Orwell states 'external events [the war] has made murder seem unimportant', asserting that violent fiction is always effected in popularity in comparison to external violence. Joyce's definition of his 'privileged offender' that it is 'in a sense, a cultural fiction, the product of a wish fulfilment which had the useful effect of diverting attention away from genuine social problems of poverty, unemployment, and labour unrest that had recently begun to reassert themselves' (Joyce, 2002, p.502). Aestheticism is 'art for art's sake', and so reading social commentary into *Picture* may be moot on the groups that it is narrative meant to be appreciated for its style rather than substance, but criticism like Joyce's will be applied to it regardless of the authors motivations for writing it, and the rises and falls in popularity that Orwell describes will still be equally relevant. This matter complicates further considering the novels characters as proponents of aestheticism, that by the novel's time of publication 'aestheticism as a cultural phenomenon was dated' and as a result 'Wilde's most famous aesthete, Lord Henry Wotton, is almost a caricature'. This could mean that the character was intended as a critique of the movement by Wilde, slyly posing that aesthetic thought ultimately leads to the destruction of oneself through hedonistic and chaotic approaches to lifestyle (Guy and Small, 2011, p.131). Regardless of Joyce's critique as applied to the text, its application to crime culture surrounding the text is clear – he sees murder as a crime the higher classes would never commit, that it is a romanticizing of motive and circumstance, and the reality was that serial killers

murdered due to poor mental health and the poor murdered out of desperation of circumstance.

Pittard asserts that the Victorian's revulsion of dirt and the concept of 'corruption' are clearly mapped onto crime and the cityscape, as seen in a Hudson's Soap advert that he describes as 'drawing on visual and ideological cues', a police officer literally shining light upon a dark alley, signifying his role in the cityscape against the backdrop of the Big Ben clock tower, Pittard directly referencing the light as signifying 'order, purity and cleanliness' (Pittard, 2011, p.2). This advert is a quintessential example of the lexical link between 'crime' and 'dirt', 'detection' and 'cleaning', example of this lexical link in each other three texts. This obsession, is seen by Pittard to be ludicrous by twentieth century standards, he lists the popular chemicals typically bragged about on food packaging in order to assure the 'cleanliness' of the product within and scoffs, showing them to be transgressive texts for the detective genre. Pittard asserts this an outdated ideology, but its entrenchment in Victorian consumer culture (the Londoners who buy soap, newspapers and novels) is absolute and socially defining.

In *Strange Case*, Enfield threatens Hyde with 'scandal' rather than a police report upon witnessing the trampling of a young girl, this choice of supposed action shows where the true power lies in the city scape and social spheres - ultimately 'Jekyll's punishment is brought about by his own hand', and those who encounter Hyde 'never consider going to the police' (Guy and Small, 2001, p.29). Much like Pittard's soap advertisement likens the product with police 'cleaning the streets', and

much like how detective fiction feeds into the clean/dirty binary, Enfield's faith is put into sensibility rather than law enforcement, gossip rather than law and the assignment of shame rather than incarceration or even the death penalty, showcasing just how absolute the notion of being socially blacklisted is – more permanent than death itself. Ironically whilst this exchange takes place, the innocent bystanders, so abhorred by Hyde's violent actions, then have to be physically restrained from attacking him whilst Enfield rebuffs him, mob mentality seemingly the one aspect of city life that defies cleanliness theory and its strict rule of 'distancing' oneself from 'unseemly' action – 'we kept the women off him as best we could, for they were as wild as harpies' (Stevenson, 1886, p.5). The usual sensibilities and customs of how to act in public seem to take a hiatus in this scene, as Enfield comments that even the doctor at the scene had 'the desire to kill him [Hyde]', an impulse that everyone at the scene, AKA 'the rest of us' harbours. What is also curious is the extortion that then takes place, not only do the crowd not even consider legal or lawful action, opting only for 'scandal', they then feel perfectly justified to 'screw him up to a hundred pounds' of his money (Stevenson, 1886, p.5). The justification for this is that this money is 'for the child's family', but this is being conducted outside the courtroom this act is just as unlawful as the trampling, being viewed as morally clean in the eyes of the crowd – an example of sensibility being more societally important than law. Why this crowd seems to hypocritically wish violence on Hyde is a matter of great interest when considering class performance and cleanliness theory, are they so angered by being made privy to a 'dirty' action

that could contaminate them that they wish to irradiate the source of dirt by any means possible? Are they reacting to Hyde's body, a misshapen ugly body that they deem to not belong? Or is it simply that contamination theory and all notions of class and performance are abandoned in a moment of true human empathy – the little girl's plight at the hands of a monster bringing people together in a common sense of justice? A doctor, a gentleman of the social clubs (Enfield) and a working to lower middle class family all coming under the title of righteous and justified when juxtaposed to Hyde and his ill demeanour. No matter the true answer, the two that we will be revisiting is that of Jekyll/Hyde's paradoxical body and how it constantly instils anger and unease in those around him, and the inherent paradox of cleanliness theory when faced with crime, the most bountiful source of 'dirt' in the city.

Cleanliness theory to was so integrated into Victorian culture that Walkowitz transposes it onto the physical city itself, highlighting its impotence in the outbreaks of cholera in 1831 and 1849, as it was around this time the underclasses became known as the 'great unwashed' (Walkowitz, 1992, p.22). This outbreak allowed the newspapers to confirm conservative fears of the danger of the prostitute 'as symbols of conspicuous display or of lower-class and sexual disorder, they occupied a multivalent symbolic position in this imaginary landscape' (Walkowitz, 1992, p. 21). Similar vernaculars can be seen in both of these theories, though they talk of relatively different subjects and don't acknowledge each other (Walkowitz and Pittard writing a decade apart), both constantly remind the reader that the Victorian



London spoken of by its inhabitants was often a fictionalisation, a physical space warped by ideology of what spectators wanted it to be and signify. Both Walkowitz and Pittard talk of how the city is shown to us through media, advertising and other popular culture, but most importantly they both focus on the *idea* of the city as it is *sold* to us, the 'seductive labyrinth' appealing to consumers because it affirmed the clean/dirty binary and also coming as a result of Sweets somewhat deliberate 'misreading', both my contemporary and twentieth century readers and writers. Wilde and Stevenson explore this dark labyrinth, and characters within the novels even react in accordance with the clean/dirty binary, but the reader is never encouraged to take part in it, nor are mysteries dangled in front of them in order to be tantalising, Wilde and Stevenson make the murders, the 'low-other' our protagonists, they show that danger does not come from the dark labyrinth but from within ourselves and how a gentleman reacts when failing to live up to his own impossible ideals.

Danahay, in his essay '*Dr Jekyll's Two Bodies*', speaks specifically of the loss when Jekyll changes into Hyde, first and foremost his title of Dr – a clear indicator of the social and physiological changes being one and the same, Hyde not expected to perform the same as Jekyll. Hyde's criminal body creates what Danahay describes as a 'corporeal duality' in constant 'conflict' between the 'degenerate, lower class body' of Hyde, and the 'decent, respectable body' of Jekyll, these ideals being solidified in class culture (Danahay, 2013, page 23). Even the geography of London and how

Jekyll sleeps is incorporated into this transformation, as Danahay says 'the class based division of London into east and west'. (Danahay, 2013, page 23). Danahay's core argument in this famous essay that Stevenson was creating a 'cautionary tale' in this novel, addressing the inherent anxiety put upon Jekyll's body (the average Victorian gentleman) to fulfil certain appetites only obtainable through becoming Hyde (a simplistic, thrill seeking brute). These appetites lie at the core of both *Strange Case* and *Picture*, and how they greatly contradict 'what is expected' of young gentleman in polite society like Dorian and Jekyll, but that ultimately not acknowledging them and even suppressing them leads them to be expressed in ugly and unlawful ways. Jekyll wishes to walk the streets free from the shackles of sensibility and expectation and Dorian struggled with the shortness of youth and his desperate attempt to extend it, even if it means mentally distancing oneself from moral dilemmas, such as his involvement in Sybil's suicide and his murder of Basil.

Danahay denotes Hyde's body as the 'hedonistic' and therefore 'degenerate' one, and this too is in keeping with Dorian's aims and purpose, his hedonistic tendencies being marked as 'degenerate' by his peers and eventually, both for Jekyll and Dorian, ending in their eventual moral comeuppance through death, as the 'pressures' that lead them to commence such a lifestyle can no longer be used as justification for their actions, if they ever could. If we are to take Danahay's view of Stevenson, then the two authors of these novels had rather polarised motives that produced very similar narratives, Wilde opting for aestheticism and beauty in the unrestrained actions of man and Stevenson seeing these actions as a dangerous by-

product of strict social stigma he deemed dangerous 'pressure' to put upon Victorian gentleman (Stevenson as quoted by Danahay, 2013, p. 24). This force of oppressive sensibility and stigma is exactly what Orwell describes as the motive for his 'perfect' murder, that 'motives [should] arise largely from status anxiety or sexual repression', he also comments that the assailant 'should commit murder because this seems to him less disgraceful, and less damaging to his career, than being detected in adultery' (Orwell, 1946). This preposterousness of sensibility and the heavy weight it places upon citizens is exactly what Stevenson sought to address through Jekyll, though Orwell cares little for the motive of his 'perfect English murderer', the motives of Jekyll and Dorian literally shape them as people, their bodies and morality twisted and contaminated as they try to address the social pressures they are under to perform their roles as wealthy, respectable gentlemen.

Both Stevenson and Wilde use our protagonist's corporeal bodies to explore their degeneracy and deterioration as a result of this 'pressure' they use them to expose the performative aspects of class and masculinity for their shallowness. Dorian's beauty is only skin deep, even an aloof smirk shown in his portrait (the first instance of it transforming) is enough for him to deem his likeness 'ugly', and Jekyll and Hyde's physicality is shown to be an interchangeable binary that ultimately end up affecting each other, a gentleman by day and a scoundrel by night. Dorian and Jekyll's appearances are both in constant battle with each other, one to stay socially acceptable and the other to stay looking youthful and beautiful, for as Sir Henry says, that's 'the one thing worth having' (Wilde, 1891, p.23), not merely the worries

of a young man but a reflection of the society he inhabits, for 'people of the nineteenth century were fascinated by time because they were conscious of being its victims' (Gilmour, 1993, p.25). Both Jekyll's respectable body and Dorian's beauty are falsehoods hiding the deviancy of Hyde and the portrait respectively, Danahay's reading of *Strange Case* proves true of both novels, societal pressure to preform accordingly pushes both men to purge their inner most desires in unhealthy and ultimately disastrous ways.

## Chapter 3: The Figure of the Detective

Charles Brownson asserts the figure of the Detective (the capital D he says indicating the figure rather than an individual character) 'a cultural icon that grounds our views of life and its possibilities and at the same time validates them' (Brownson, 2014, p.1). His research is 'based on the assertion that literary formulas 'genres' are not arbitrary constructs but come into existence out of the needs and fears of their readers' (Brownson, 2014, p. 2) and he cites crime fiction as something 'that does not contain a detective or it does not follow the rules of the genre' (Brownson, 2014, p.5), this seems to be congruent with the research done in this paper, but this view of the literary world seems to have only been developed (or at least popularised) over the past few years and Brownson himself has few kindred spirits when it comes to this methodology of approaching crime fiction criticism. When viewing *Picture* in this sense, it appears that the lack of a detective is a result of Wilde seemingly not viewing Dorian's narrative as a problem to be 'solved', it is part of the aestheticism movement and the expression of both the novel and the protagonist would be heavily restricted if it had to contend and work within the constructs and constraints of the traditional detective plot. Wilde goes as far to add detective like characters such as Basil and then remove them from proceedings so that the chaotic trajectory of Dorian's life can remain unimpeded save for his own self-reflection upon viewing his portrait. Even though detective like characters occupy these novels, they are ultimately too involved in the story to be the cold,

centralist ambassador of reason and justice that is the detective figure. An absence of the lawful figure allows crime to happen, allows these narratives to find their 'natural' conclusion, without any true lawful human intervention outside of our murder's own actions and self-reflection, such as Dorian's accidental suicide and Jekyll's own demise. A detective narrative hangs largely on the possessing of information, the detective imparts knowledge on the reader and innocent characters and as such is seen as being beyond them, an almost omnipotent figure in control of the flow of the story itself, eliminating this figure (or simply not including them) breaks down that barrier, we see our murderers for what they truly are – human and victim to their own crimes, rather than a target to be caught or a monster to be unmasked (a civilised gentlemen stripped of his false mask of sensibility, wealth, finery and revealed to be 'other').

Brownson initially acknowledges the argument of whether detective's stories are 'worthy of readers and critics' or are 'simply lowbrow entertainment', but opts to not investigate it in his own research as he deems it inconsequential to the importance of the figure of the detective. The categorisation of crime fiction in terms of class and importance to the literary canon are common topics, but much like Ian Bell in his preface to *Watching the Detectives*, Brownson finds this popular discussion to be misleading and obfuscating of other criticism and part of a vicious cycle of reasoning and argument that leads to no academic benefit (Brownson, 2014, p.5). The two seem to take a more modern approach to crime fiction critique, deeming much of its previous criticism as unwarranted distain, based, as Bell puts it, on a

‘homogeneity and recognisability [that begins] to disappear once examined’ (Bell, 1991, p.1). Bell laments that much of the criticism on this ‘immensely popular form’ of literature ‘relies heavily on the notion of genre’ and that ‘all sorts of things get lumped together under [this] general category’, these obstructions in criticism and outdated models of thinking are exactly why Brownson spends so much of his time outlining his own terminology and schemas that he invents anew for his study of the *Figure of the Detective*, and we see the need for these specific new inventions when examining our three texts.

*Armada*, published in 1866, is caught in time between the popular romantic novels of the early half of the century such as *Zofloya* and Conan Doyle with *A Study in Scarlet* in 1887. Whilst the romantic novels always had prying characters who might unearth some information to further the plot, none of them come close to filling the shoes of the detective compared to *Armada*’s own Mr Brock. When it comes to cornering Midwinter and demanding answers from him, Brock’s ‘detective arc’ has all the mystery and intrigue of a romantic novel but with the satisfying results of a detective case – he learns that young Allan is sought after by unknown people for unknown reasons from a newspaper article - ‘I can hardly believe my own eyes, here is an advertisement, addressed to your son’ (Collins, 1866) and, after initial denial, from Allan’s mother on her deathbed – ‘Never let his namesake come near him! Never let that woman find him out!’ (Collins, 1866). He learns of a mysterious homeless man that comes to the village and establishes a kinship with Allan, he interrogates the man, Midwinter, about his past and about the conflicting

testimony he is then given, he travels with the two to further observe Midwinter and finally he unveils the mystery of Midwinter's origin and if he is or is not a threat to young Allan, now in Brock's charge. If we compare Brock's involvement in this short-lived mystery to Sherlock Holmes' case in *Study in Scarlet*, we see similar interactions and occurrences – an initial mystery proposed to them, one via letter and the other by newspaper, a complicating factor in the form of a visitor (Midwinter and the old woman who claims the ring), further intrigue and clues (Midwinter's falsified first telling of his story and the second murder in *Scarlet*), red herrings in the form of the word 'RACHE' written at the Holmes crime scenes and in the form of Midwinter himself in that he has nothing to do with Lydia's visit. They share travel based narratives, and, of course, have the all-important 'big reveal'. Considering this, what does it tell us of Mr Brock's position as stand-in detective? He unveils the true nature of Midwinter, but it is a sour victory as it is only revealed to Brock himself, only through Midwinter's own willingness to confess, and the real threat remains completely unknown, striking later in the absence of Brock. *Armada* is a novel caught between trends, between times and styles, and whilst it shirks many of the tropes of romantic fiction it can hardly be called a precursor or prelude into detective fiction, certainly not when the detective stand ins (Brock and later, Midwinter) are so ineffectual.

The central critics discussed thus far are, for the most part, contemporary figures in literary crime criticism, at least in the sense that they were not themselves Victorians. But what of the Victorians themselves? More self-conscious and self-



critical than contemporary representation would have us believe, what did the public and writers of the time deduce from the increase in popularity of crime narratives in the wake of industrialisation?

In the next chapter, I explore the two greatest influences to crime fiction discourse outside of novels and criticism – newspapers and forensic science development. These non-fictional aspects of the culture of crime are important phenomena during the publication and public consumption of my three chosen novels and as such have considerable impact, for they effected the critical discourse of the period and ultimately shaped how the Victorians conceptualised criminals and the criminal body.

## Chapter 4: On Cheap Newspapers, Degeneration, Savageness and Lombroso

In the previous chapter, I discussed contemporary ways of looking at the crime fiction genre, moving from the oldest criticisms of Orwell's 1946 essay to the more recent of Brownson and Bell. But what of nineteenth-century criticism on the booming popularity of this literature? What did the critics and academics of the time make of the real and fictional crime worlds they found themselves surrounded by towards the end of the century? As my usage of the Orwell Model and the essay it came from is especially concerned with the spectacle of murder and the public interest; this chapter seeks to establish the importance of journalism in my findings thus far, to conclude on how much these fictional works were influenced by the tabloids and how fiction in turn influenced them. I shall also explore the cultural phenomena of 'degeneration theory' and the crime related sciences being established in the latter half of the nineteenth century, Cesare Lombroso's 'anthropological criminology', his 'Social Darwinism' and the fear of the 'criminal underclass' that informed and was perpetuated by his studies.

When talking of the wave of crime fiction during this period, few critics approach the subject without acknowledging the print media surrounding and feeding into it, Orwell states of Victorian murder that 'the amount of literature surrounding them, in the form of newspaper write-ups, criminological treatises and reminiscences by lawyers and police officers, would make a considerable library' (Orwell, 1946). The sheer quantity of non-fictional writing surrounding real world crime is not the sole reason for its relevance in discourse of Victorian crime culture,

for 'throughout the Victorian period, the various aspects of journalism are of the greatest importance in the study of literature [as] many writers saw the first publication of their work in reviews and magazines' (Chapman, 1968, p.76).

When discussing class-focused crime novels such as those of Elizabeth Gaskell and Charles Dickens, Kate Flint remarks that 'such literature did not exist in isolation. Around it lay a vast number of government reports – the Blue Books; newspaper and periodical articles and letters; pamphlets and exploratory surveys' (Kate Flint, 1987, p.1). Whether twentieth century critics talk of real world events or crime fiction stories, the secondary material is always intrinsically linked, whether by proving influence for Gaskell, the first writing platform for journalists who would become novelists themselves, or whether this material was used to help form the narrative of the seductive labyrinth. George Sims and his fellow urban explorers were not alone in their construction of the 'labyrinth' mythology of London - reporting on the inner city and the lives of its denizens had become a popular fiction of its own - 'as a category, life-writing achieved a new significance in this period' (Guy and Small, 2011, p.111). Pamphleters and reporters were seizing the opportunity to document the changing times, from Ashead and Engels offering insight into living situations of the poor to moralists such as Samuel Smiles who wrote countless pamphlets on how to live in a Christian, socially mobile manner in the wake of new industry, propagating the 'ideologies of individualism' and 'self-help manuals' (Guy and Small, 2011, p.111). His infamous call to this new middle

class was 'what some men are, all, without difficulty, might be' (Smiles, 1859). Such promises were an illusion in a society that fought to maintain distinct barriers between its classes, and ironically (or hypocritically) the writing of Smiles and his peers helped maintain these rigid class definitions, for 'the poor were offered [these] papers designed for their self-help and improvement, to elevate their taste and keep them from drink' (Chapman, 1968, p.71). Drunkenness, idle behaviour and poor sensibility then were presupposed for this 'all' that was promised they 'might be' elevated in society, a true carrot and stick mentality, and a falsehood at that, as no drunkard could ever hope to fit in with high society due to concepts of permanent 'impurity' being so engrained within its social gatekeepers. Print media was not alone in fostering this class/crime association, public speech and lecture endured despite mass print media, still able to enthrall audiences and foster certain perceptions. The topics present in public speeches bled into print and those in print were in turn spoken of at these lectures - 'monthlies and quarterlies allowed for public discussion of political concerns on issues such as the effectiveness of contemporary authority' (Zwierlein, 2016). As always, crime and criminality were a common topic, publications such as *The Strand Magazine* occupying a strange space between news and fiction, illustrated prints of actual events (such as this public speaking) were a regular part of the magazine, but these still served to mystify and obscure the events in their depiction, further complicating the conveyance of knowledge. On the streets and in the pages, lower classes and criminal behavior were being associated with one another, and the fictional genre of crime suffered this

same stigma, for there was an air of 'apprehension by nineteenth century cultural criticism [as they regarded crime fiction] as a low and therefore populist literary medium' (Walker, 2007, p.23).

Impressionable audiences were a point of great contention in public forums and print, Kate Flint also tells us of how Chartist meetings, and their second hand representations in the media 'fed middle-class apprehension about the potential for violence inherent within the working classes if nothing was done about their living and working conditions' (Flint, 1987, p.5). At this point we must bear in mind that thanks to increased literary rates 'the trashy, sensationalist literature of the time was not bought by only one class' (Chapman, 1968, p.62), and that indeed, the higher classes were sold myths of the lower and the lower were sold myths about the higher. 'Ten years before the publication of *Jekyll and Hyde* [newspapers] were also rife with media exposés concerning the secret lives of outwardly respectable upper-middle-class men', this fostered the public fears that 'respectable exteriors often masked immoral or criminal behavior' (Clarke, 2014, p. 22), a preexisting notion of the 'privileged offer' being seemingly corroborated in the news media. If these stories influence on the public bears relevance, then their influence on writers is paramount, for the 'deviant practices' present in *Strange Case* 'strongly suggest that Stevenson had the London Minotaur and the Saunterer in the Labyrinth in mind' during the time he wrote the novel. 'Stevenson's private papers show that he read the Maiden Tribute at the time of writing', and even suggest that certain exposés in these publications even 'influenced the themes of duplicity [exhibited] in the

comfortable classes' (Clarke, 2014, p.26). 'The last decade of the century saw the growth of papers devoted largely to short stories and 'true life' experiences. Their very titles reflect the new age of reading with metropolitan culture and imperial vision, Strand [in 1890] and Pall Mall Magazine' in 1893 (Chapman, 1968, p.68), the Penny Bloods consumption by the lower classes was now mirrored in the middle class' consumption of these papers, societal discourse once more turning towards murder as a narrative of great importance and demand.

This new age of media was not solely in the business of fostering class based prejudices however, the glamorization and mystification surrounding the celebrity of murder was brought about by these very same publications, the age that saw the celebrity author in Wilde also brought about the celebrity criminal, for as Sweet tells us 'newsagents sold pinups of serial killers', (Sweet, 2011, p.6). In his book *The Complete Jack The Ripper*, Donald Rumbelow comments that it is still 'surprising just how quickly the public seized on the dramatic possibilities' of the Ripper and other 'gaslight ghouls', that 'a cursory glance at the contemporary illustrated magazines' demonstrates the financial prospects of capitalising on the figure of the serial killer (Rumbelow, 1975, p. 285). To highlight the link between the fiction and social concern during this time, 'a decline in literary standards became particularly prominent around the 1880's, [and was] viewed as part of a larger cultural degeneration', societal decline being a Victorian anxiety that bled into every facet of their culture, not merely being the subject of their fiction but surrounding the creation and consumption of it (Guy and Small, 2011, p.33).

The industrial revolution brought about changes in 'religious belief, moral codes, attitudes to class, to sexual roles [and] to sexuality itself', these changes are described by William Greenslade as 'seismic disturbances, shock, subsidence and erosion' (Greenslade, 1994, p.15). It was these changes that brought about what he describes as 'the growth of degeneration [as a] fully fledged explanatory myth'. Degeneration theory is multitudinous in its meanings and application, but its purpose is poised by Greenslade as an attempt to 'identify the sources of rot', once against exhibiting the same lexical tendency present in Pittard's 'impurity' and 'dirtiness' and 'contamination' and Ashead's contemporary concerns of a subsidence in moral and practical 'decency'. Degeneration theory found its place in literature too, H.G Wells *The Time Machine* was, to those who believed in this theory a 'devolutionary nightmare', 'drawing upon late Victorian fears about the degenerative potential in evolution', clearly positioning fear of degeneration as public and popular culture interpretation of Darwin *On the Origin of Species* (Gilmour, 1993, p. 137). We have already discussed how Stevenson dissects Jekyll's corporal body through the medium of class performance and undergoing physical transformation, but for inhabitants of the nineteenth Century the deconstruction of the masculine criminal body was a common spectacle, literally, anatomically and theoretically. In a study conducted by the University of Leicester entitled *Harnessing the Power of the Criminal Corpse*, Dr Elizabeth Hurren states that autopsies conducted at Cambridge typically had 'three audiences', 'medical fraternity', 'educated towns people' and 'finally, the crowd [that] bought tickets to watch the punishment of

deviance dissected to its extremities' (Hurren, 2011). The first group needs little explanation, the second standing somewhere between academic curiosity and voyeurism and the third being purely voyeuristic – that justice had been exacted on the living criminal seemingly holding little relevance to a crowd that viewed the body (even when void of life) as being permanently dirty, other and contaminated, a spectacle to behold.

This is yet another paradox of 'urban spectatorship', for acts of corpse desecration are reserved for the villains of such stories as Stevenson's *The Body Snatcher* and many of its contemporary tales to be engaged by the very readership that cheered the downfall of these villains is perplexing, yet it does establish a very clear link in Victorian culture between crime and the body. Once again we can revert to Pittard's cleanliness theory for why these 'crowds' partook in this viewing experience, but certainly here the 'contagion' analogy falters – surely the average city dweller would want to avoid the criminal body (and the dirt it signifies) at all costs, especially when they clearly believe that 'deviance' remains even when life does not? For this explanation we can refer to another of our author's extended bibliography, not Stevenson but Orwell and his dystopian depiction of London in *1984*. Within this novel exists a practice called the 'two minute's hate' in which citizens are shown a collection of images of foreign political enemies in order to induce a hostile atmosphere towards them in the minds of the citizens.

Orwell crafted the 'two minute's hate' from wartime propaganda, a form of media very familiar to a writer who had lived through two - here the participants are



encouraged to show their anger and outrage of images of political rivals shown to them on a screen, anyone who doesn't is treated with suspicion. According to Dr Hurren, 'crowds' at criminal autopsies would be expected to perform a similar type of staged revulsion, regardless of the crowd's internal feelings - here urban spectatorship already established as a form of sport one must participate in to conform to sensibility, to be deemed 'clean' one must be shown to actively denounce the 'dirt'. Thus draws a very distinct separation between genuine abhorrence to criminality and shallow condemning in the *Strange Case* scene of the trampling of the girl, the woman bystanders are so genuinely horrified and enraged by Hyde's criminal action that they are willing to 'dirty' themselves by enacting violence upon him, whereas the 'outrage' that Utterson threatens Hyde with would come from the second hand source of gossip and print newspaper, the readerships denouncing Hyde's criminality too, but not in the passionately fuelled way of the women who were willing to damn their own respectability, but more akin to the 'crowds' of criminal autopsy, condemning as they are expected to condemn those branded 'dirty' by society. 'In 1876, only a few years before the publication of *The Body Snatcher*, Cesare Lombroso published *L'uomo Delinquent* in which he argued that criminals are a distinct physical and biological type, and that they can therefore be identified by observing certain physical traits' (Ambrosini, 2006, p.147). Lombroso 'wanted to move beyond moral management by employing practices of measurement and identification', chiefly his method involved the measurement of depressions in the skull (Greenslade, 1994, p.91). Lombroso's 'discoveries' meant

that 'by the turn of the century not just the criminal, but the genius, the artist, the political revolutionary and the prostitute were all branded with the notorious physical stigmata of degeneracy' (Greenslade, 1994, p.92). This writing, was as ever, fuelled by Victorian anxiety and consumerism, for 'physical deformity [aka proof of criminality and degeneration], with its enticing spectacle of horror, could be counted on to provide sensational copy within the popular culture of late nineteenth-century Britain' (Greenslade, 1994, p.99).

Physiological and biological ways of establishing identity and motive were certainly no alien concept, in our novels both Jekyll and Dorian begin their arcs performing the masculinity of the gentleman, but by the end both have transferred into 'monster' masculinities. Jekyll confesses that the 'animal within' threatened to overtake him at any moment, establishing the frailty and weakness of his muscular Christianity, that he 'is at the mercy of the overpowering Hyde, his civilised, masculine scientist self is being surpassed - he hisses, snarls [and] as a savage, jumps out like a rat' (Schoch, 2013, p.5). 'Savageness' was a term used excessively throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century, especially relevant in Rider Haggard's Allan Quatermain novels, and was used to describe a 'primal' form of masculinity that was at once repugnant and desirable, practical and impressive yet primitive. 'Many nineteenth century writers looked to the past for solutions to contemporary problems, and also frequently compared their own culture to varieties of foreignness' (Guy and Small, 2011, p.53). Comparing oneself to the 'foreign' might be thought of as a method of establishing one's selfhood through the establishment

of what is 'other' to oneself, but figures created by Britain's colonial history like Quatermain represented a negotiation of this 'savageness' and the English ideals of the gentleman, creating a compromise of African masculinity more palatable to English readers.

Quatermain knows the landscape of Africa - its wildlife and its languages, his physical appearance benefits from the exposure to the sun and the hardiness that comes with heavy labour – but because these qualities are displayed in the form of a white man born in England they lose their 'undesirable' qualities and are no longer seen as a reversion to a savage state but as a return to strength and true masculinity as observed by the two English gentlemen Sir Henry and Captain Good in Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* 'when one has tasted brandy and water, milk becomes insipid to the taste' that he is 'sick of shooting pheasants' and wants to hunt 'big game' and that he is sick of 'playing the squire', in short, that true strength and masculinity means denouncing the sensibilities of England, and at least in Sir Henry Cutis's case, living out the rest of his days in Africa (Haggard, 1887, p.2). Jekyll and Dorian fail at this balance of sensibilities and both of them are seen as reversions, their physicality and violence depict them as savages and monsters to their peers rather than adopters like the doted on Quatermain, their tales are ones of degeneration told through their corporeal bodies, with specific mention to 'physical deformity', a 'morbid deviation from a perfect primitive type' and being 'founded on the Darwinian revolution in biology' (Greenslade, 1994, p.16). Our protagonist's failure to reconcile their bodies and social surroundings could be due to a myriad of

reasons, a change in geography, a change in appearance, the obvious legal consequences of their actions – all a product Stevenson's 'pressures' to perform, that performing gentlemanly traits under the scrutiny of peers was not desirable but instead poisonous. As a result, the 'savageness' of Hyde cannot be assimilated or commodified into desirable traits, his savageness renders him nothing but an animal, and Jekyll himself must concede that his continued existence would cause 'the hands of all men to reach out and slay him' (Stevenson, 1886) like a feral beast, reminiscent of Lombroso likening 'criminals, savages and apes' (Greenslade, 1994, p.92). Dorian and Jekyll's transformations can be likened to that of Quatermain's adaptation to African life, Sir Henry Curtis' distaste for 'milk' once he has tasted 'brandy' being similar to Jekyll's own need to break free of petty English sensibility through Hyde. Urban explorer George Sim's stance that London is the new mysterious adventure after the colonies have been explored proven through Hyde as he is a figure representing the fact that masculinities and sensibilities don't just change from an Englishman living abroad like Quatermain, but that they can transform at home too. Haggard and Stevenson's transgressive Englishmen represent a binary opposite to Orwell's man on the sofa and the figure of the detective – whilst Orwell's man represents the status quo and the detective fights to uphold the status quo, Jekyll and Quaterman break free of the expectations put upon them as English gentlemen. Quaterman in many ways represents the happy ending Jekyll and Dorian never achieved, as they had to hide their hedonistic tendencies

whilst Quatermain left the country in order to pursue the life he wanted to lead free from the moral judgement of a social sphere.

Physical appearance seems key to all three men in regards to their performance of masculinity, Jekyll has the build of a gentleman and is constantly juxtaposed against the stunted ugliness of Hyde, Dorian has an immortal beauty that is a thin veil for his ugly personality, and Quatermain is a well-groomed and humbly built man, not boasting a great beauty like Dorian or a great strength like Sir Henry (his Sir Henry, not Dorian's Sir Henry) but clearly embodying a negotiation between English and African sensibilities. Quatermain's values are established quite clearly, for he says he has known Africa men 'who are' gentlemen and 'mean whites with lots of money who are not', to him nationality and class are the same useless confines that Sir Henry Curtis denounces and the mark of the true gentleman is rooted in strength and courtesy (Haggard, 1885, p.1). The 'savageness' of Hyde in *Strange Case* is the cause for the novel's 'tragic' events, but their catalyst lies in the separation of the gentleman and the savage due to the unfulfilled 'appetites of the masculine body' which lead to the 'complete loss of manly self-control' (Danahay). It is through their escape from their country and social sphere that Haggard's Sir Henry and Captain Good are able to exercise their 'appetites' - for Quatermain's companions, Africa is the exciting unknown, and when describing the 'urban explorers', Walkowitz suggests that they are not alone in seeking out these qualities, yet she also describes Engels and Dickens as detractors of these idealists, as 'men who tried to read the illegible city, transforming what appeared to be a chaotic,

haphazard environment into a social text that was integrated, knowable and ordered' (Walkowitz, 1992, Page 18).

Whilst Hyde's savageness marks him as degenerate, Jekyll's choices mark him too, for degeneration theorist Max Nordau described the phenomenon as 'a corrupt and destructive narcissism', that 'whoever worships his I is an enemy of society', his contemporary Lombroso agreed in his own definition that 'obsessive preoccupation with self' results in 'morbidity' and ultimately, degeneration (Nordau quoted by Walker, 2007, p.37). Jekyll's creation of Hyde is ultimately a self-serving one, as it allows him to indulge in deviant activities, and his protection of his doppelganger is selfish in that it puts the public in danger of further violence. As a result of Lombroso and Nordau's rhetoric 'decadence as an artistic movement' became 'virtually synonymous with degeneration' by the fin de siècle (Walker, 2007, p.23), the time of *Picture's* publication. Given the text's engagement with aestheticism and Dorian's self-worship first in his likeness in the painting and later in his hedonistic excursions, both the protagonist and his author would have been labelled as 'the carrier of a prevailing cultural sickness', as all 'decadent artists' were by the lexicon of degeneration theorists (Walker, 2007, p.37).

Dorian's hedonism, Jekyll's doppelganger and Quatermain's engagement in 'savagery' are all forms of cultural and physiological escape, Africa being a geographical escape for Quatermain and his two compatriots. From Stevenson and Haggard we receive distinctive statement that England is not as it should be in their eyes, Jekyll and Sir Henry acting as mouthpieces for this sense of struggle in the

performance of current English sensibility. In Marie Mies essay *White Man's Dilemma* she ponders 'can it be that white civilisation...has ultimately turned out to be a "painted desert?" That, much as Sir Henry demonstrates in his lust for African life 'this urban civilisation obviously does not make for happiness' (Mies, 2014, p.133). For Sir Henry, this is 'despair and poverty in the midst of plenty' (Mies, 2014, p.133), 'like the fifteenth and sixteenth century adventures and pirates, affluent men [like Sir Henry] are urged to experience the challenges of early discoverers' (Mies, 2014, p.132). Sir Henry is clearly willing to heed this call, seeing Africa as a challenge, adventure and most importantly of all a trail to prove masculinity for he 'too, want[s] to penetrate virgin land and open it up for white civilisation' (Mies, 2014, p.132). In doing so, colonial invaders like Sir Henry 'destroy what they look for while they find it' (Klemens Ludurf quoted by Mies, 2014, p.132), much like Jekyll destroys himself in the act of balancing English civil masculinities with his true wants and impulses, although both men endanger those that surround them as they struggle to attain this balance.

In his novel *Treasure Island* and many of his essays, Stevenson expresses this same yearning of Haggard - to reclaim pursuits and ideals that are lost in the form of colonialist 'discoveries'. This, coupled with his criticism of the 'pressures' that gentlemen of his time were under, show a tendency of Stevenson to clamour for the past, for boyhood and adventure rather than the clean cut manners of the English dandy and gentleman. Sir Henry's embodiment of the 'savage' Englishmen, appropriating physical traits of 'ancient races' as Quatermain puts it, whilst retaining

them in a civil white body, is the ideal for this counter-culture idea of the Haggard/Stevenson gentleman, for *King Solomon's Mines* is dedicated by Haggard 'to all the big and little boys who read it'.



## Chapter 5: Conclusion

Overall, the relevance of the Orwell Model can be seen beyond its time frame, the requirements of its 'perfect English murderer' are fulfilled in numerous cases of fact and fiction, the line between Hyde and real world counterparts blurred as one informs the other. As Orwell details, when seeking out crime narratives readers are drawn to those of the gentleman turned monster, of the professional man turned criminal and of the respectable becoming dirty. It is in the nature of readers of crime narrative to seek out the taboo, yet it seems that the taboo of the crime itself can become lacklustre and taken for granted, further taboo is sought out in the identity and downfall of the killer, their deviant lives laid bare for spectators to judge and assure themselves of their own cleanliness – the popularity of detective stories came at the peak time of idealised male sensibility and urban spectatorship in the industrialised city scape – a perfect recipe. For the Victorian newspaper readers, novel fanatics and urban explorers, this was to define their place in the new urbanised world of England, for how could they consider themselves 'clean' if they did not judge the 'dirty'? This 'moral high ground' granted to the reader is certainly nothing new, but with Victorian societal fears being mapped onto urban spaces it acted as a clearing of conscience in a panopticon ('an inspection house to be used for surveillance purposes in public institutions' (Scott, 2016)), in which performance was constantly monitored – readers found comfort that, no matter how they lapsed as an

upstanding citizen, there were real monsters operating in the streets that made them saintly by comparison.

The crime of the Romance novel that dominated the first half of the eighteenth century fell in favour of the new detective, audiences no longer wished to read of a criminal with the mundane motive of crime or profit – in the wake of degeneration theory and early psychology, they wished to read of monsters in human skin. Papers such as A.L. Wigan's *The Duality of Mind* became commonly known and its terminology became part of Victorian lexicon, though its intent was misunderstood – to the common public, scientific papers were seen as a warning much like the writing of Lombroso and Nordau, the way in which they were read created further fear and anxiety in the discourse of crime and ultimately the othering of criminals. Sweet, Walkowitz, Bell and Brownson all take a similar approach to Victorian crime fiction discourse as their writing involves combating already established ideas and even falsehoods about the era. In their respective publications; Sweet attempts to abolish certain misnomers and myths, Walkowitz attempts to establish the importance of the working class woman's role and Bell and Brownson attempt to reimagine the Victorian detective and the fiction he exists in without the constraints and limiting terms established by nineteenth and early twentieth century criticism. When examining the three research questions I set out with, each critic leaves us with a certain degree of insight about why Victorians read about murder, why it

defied genre, and why readers sought out and still seek to read of the 'perfect murder'?

Returning to the research questions I began with – why were Victorian readerships so preoccupied with murder? To put it bluntly - because it is exciting to read about, leading the reader down a path of mystery's to be solved and villains to be caught. The death of a character (particularly at the hands of another character) can act as a catalyst for drama and plot development, it necessitates quickness in the immediate reactions towards the event but also begins a slow meticulous unfolding of events. It was and is a popular device for writers as it offers a simple and flexible form of storytelling, but for readers (and particularly the Victorians) it was so much more. In the newly industrialised age when England was thought to have reached a new level of civilisation, crime was a bigger problem than it had ever been – a constant reminder that no matter how technologically advanced the nation was and no matter how sophisticated the higher classes considered themselves, there would always be tension and conflict in class cohabitation, inner city living and the heart (or mind) of every man.

The second question, 'why specifically violent crime?' is that the violence was thrilling to a comfortable middle class readership who has the luxury of avoiding such incidents in their day to day lives, and for the Victorians the violence bore special merit. The newly crafted city scape made spectatorship a social compulsion,

the art and media said spectators consumed only furthered their practice, their everyday lives were inclined to voyeurism and their hobbies became so too. In the pages of a novel the mundanity and familiarity of death was infused with the unfamiliar territory of gas lit dark alley murder, a phenomenon surrounding the reader in the form of real world crime in the newspapers but not necessarily an experience the reader would be intimately familiar with from first hand experiences. Murder created questions within the novel in the forms of detective mysteries and whodunit but they also added to a pre-existing consumer culture of titillation and voyeurism. And so this draws to the final question – why the gentleman? The gentleman as murderer makes for the perfect tale of hypocrisy that the model citizen of English civility is at heart a wild beast, bloodthirsty, ugly and ultimately better than no one. The gentleman as murderer not only tears down class walls and social signifiers but also addresses them as the cause of the problem – a melting pot of repression and shame, Jekyll and Dorian are a ‘good man’ and a promising youth who are corrupted by outside influences. Of course, for the readerships that are not looking for such a revolution and are not so keen to heed the warnings of Stevenson on the dangers of performance, the ‘gentleman as murderer’ also serves as the quintessential fall from grace. For the social spectators that take pleasure in their peers being degraded this failure to perform in such an extreme manner (transition from perfect gent to dirty criminal in one action) seems to reinforce a sense of self, they read about those who are dirty to establish themselves as clean, a binary that detective fiction certainly reinforced on a Victorian public.

I chose the three primary texts initially because in their own ways they each recognise Orwell's Model as the norm and then refute it, Jekyll and Dorian are gentleman murderers, but their motives are designed to deconstruct that very idea – Jekyll's failure to perform and Dorian's failure to retain the only qualities that society rewards (beauty, youth) are the cause of their murderous ways. Upon applying my questions to the texts, they also rebel against these three forms of popularity in crime fiction: murder, violence and gentleman culprit.

Each of the three texts deals with murder, a person dies and the living are left with questions, the slight exception being *Armadale* in that the first murder is found out through deathbed confession – not an especially long lived mystery when the first the audience hears of it is an explanation, the perpetrator already close to death and so escaping both justice and a special reveal in the parlour scene. In *Picture* our first murder comes when the perpetrator is already socially questionable (indeed it comes about exactly because of this with Basil seeking Dorian out), there has been such a clear path leading to this event that whilst it is shocking it also seems inevitable, much like the quicker escalation found in *Strange Case*. In the third novel the perpetrator (Hyde) not only has a questionable reputation by the time we meet him (much like Dorian before his first homicide) but is physically reviled by all who meet him, both novels taking much of the impact from their murders, many of the usual components intended to create a sense of shock and tension are lost. Secondly

there is the specificity of violent crime, and once again the novels indulge in this feature, but once again it is not in the conventional, marketable way – like the murder it is implemented not to tell an intriguing mystery but to ask questions. The violent murder in *Picture* is inescapably intimate, not designed to alienate the reader from the murder but draw them and their emotions right into the confrontation, it is an act of desperation as one friend tries to regulate another's behaviour and performance and is stabbed for his meddling – a clear damning of the kind of culture the crime fiction readership took part in and that said novels usually supported. The surveillance approving spectator enabling genre that told the public to report their neighbour (for fear they might be a serial killer) is rebuked by Wilde to mind their own business or get stabbed. Lastly there is the heart of the matter, the popularity and sought after 'gentleman as murderer' which each of the novels turns on its head as Jekyll commits crime because he is forced to play the role of gentleman, Dorian is pressured and corrupted before he can realise his societal potential and Lydia is of course neither rich, gentry or male.

All in all, Orwell's 'perfect murder' is simply that which he saw to be the most English, but his description of the reactionary culture surrounding murder has relevance today - the more sensational the scandal and crime the better newspapers and novels sold and the 'cleaner' the consumer may feel by psychologically distancing themselves. Much like Brookes' 'chain of wealth and poverty' and the class system being restructured in the wake of industry, the more levels to a social

hierarchy that were created the further morally and monetarily higher the reader found themselves. With the advent of degeneration theory came the concept of the absolute criminal, along with further rules on how to conduct oneself in society. Whilst Stevenson saw the increase in 'rules to live by' to be a source of great pressure, others doubtless found it relieving to have further separating signifiers to distinguish and distance themselves from 'the degenerate', for the phenomena was sold as a 'cultural sickness'. On first inspection the stigmatisation and social barriers fostered by crime fiction seem problematic and complicating, but for an age ripe with social anxiety and surveillance and scrutiny by peers, these seem comforting thoughts indeed. For the question of why exactly did the Victorians love to read of murder, the answer is a sense of distance and comfort – the notion that violent crime exists elsewhere, outside your social and geographical sphere, they are gruesome tales of monsters and violence that could not possibly happen to you.

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